

# THE LILT OF LIFE

By ZORA CROSS





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THE LILT OF LIFE



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By ZORA CROSS

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and "The City of Riddle-Me-Ree"*

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Z. C.



## CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE LILT OF LIFE - - - - -	I
MAN AND WOMAN - - - - -	12
SONNETS OF MOTHERHOOD - - - - -	77
COLUMBINE - - - - -	122
HEART'S DESIRE - - - - -	124
AUSTRALIA IN ENGLAND - - - - -	125
WISHES - - - - -	126
WOMAN - - - - -	127
GIPSY-JOY - - - - -	129
FAIRY RIDE - - - - -	130
THE MAGIC FIDDLER - - - - -	131
THE LAND OF HEART'S DESIRE - - - - -	132
SLEEP - - - - -	134
CHILD-SONG - - - - -	135
SPIRITS OF THE STREET - - - - -	136
AN EARLY MOON - - - - -	137
TINKER TIME - - - - -	138
LITTLE BO-PEEP - - - - -	140
LOVE'S EVOLUTION - - - - -	141
FRAGMENT - - - - -	142
NUMERALS - - - - -	142
HAPPY SONG - - - - -	143
HELEN IN HYDE PARK - - - - -	144
A WEDDING SONG - - - - -	146



THE LILT OF LIFE



# THE LILT OF LIFE

## I

**B**E blithe, my soul, the world is free!  
Shrill high the pipes of Liberty!  
The mountains melt to azure mist,  
The dancing sea is amethyst.  
The rose beside the yellow wall  
Is opening at the young bird's call.  
The air is sweet. No rain complains  
Along the old, green window panes.  
The happy dawn is rosy white;  
And, through the lanes of leaping light,  
The brown bee sails on scented wing,  
While every poppy turns to sing  
Her drowsy, faint imagining.  
O soul of me, no more forsaken  
In glooms of fear,  
A thousand melodies awaken;  
The fetters from your wings are shaken;  
Your day shines clear,  
For Death is dead.  
With muffled tread,  
See the dark procession go—  
Plume, and hearse, and solemn show.  
Priest and sexton walk beside;  
And black Fate that was his bride

THE LILT OF LIFE

Wears the weeds of widow-woe.  
Lay him low!  
Let no prayer of hope be read,  
Speak no blessing o'er his head.  
Dust to dust,  
Mould and rust—  
Even so.  
He is gone that was our foe.  
Death is dead.

II

Dew on the shining leaf  
Morning on morning,  
Sun on green blade and sheaf;  
And a swift bird scorning  
With his aspiring song  
The dark that hid the wrong.  
Sunrise driving the night  
Ever and ever;  
And a brown hand clasped in a white  
That none may sever  
Through all the days of the years,  
And the years love-laden;  
But never a falling of tears  
For the lover or maiden.



### THE LILT OF LIFE

There is never an end to all,  
For the thing that we feared is dead;  
And the earth is over its head,  
And the woods and the meadows call!

### III

Let all the earth with happy voice  
Through dimpled hill and vale rejoice.  
Let the glad mountain lift its head  
Above the graves of all the dead.  
Let fallowed field and daisied lea,  
Green, tossing forest, waving free,  
And finest sands of every sea  
Swell the clear shout of victory.  
For Death is dead.  
No more the airs are broken  
With wailings round the bed,  
No more the words are spoken  
With bent and sorrowing head,  
For Love that on a breath  
Fails and grows cold.  
Sing, Earth, through all your morning gold!  
The grave shall never call again.  
Triumphant Man shall live and reign  
Victorious over Death.

IV

O love, who brought my soul to me,  
Come, join the dancing witchery.  
My little hand is close in yours  
And everlasting sweetness lures  
The passion of delight along  
My body like a song.  
O bare our breasts unto the light  
And from the dawn drink clearest sight  
As, up-hill swinging,  
We reach the summit of our dreams  
Above the valleys and the streams  
With blue bells ringing;  
And see beneath us far below  
Meadow on meadow toss and blow  
Eternal green of field and hill  
Leading to greener beauties still,  
Where the blue-eyed day and free  
Sings her carol lullingly,  
“From all have cold and darkness fled  
For Death—Death is dead.”

## THE LILT OF LIFE

### V

Let all the seas through all their waters sing,  
Where wave on wave the crested billows fling  
Their foamy spray on fretted rock and shore.  
Let the deep organ of the tempest roar  
Tumultuous joy to all the winds that blow.  
And let the fluting ripples come and go  
Round coral isles that sleep in purple calm—  
A pulsing treble to the ocean's psalm.  
No shipwrecked bones shall hide  
Below the waving weed  
For evermore.  
No shoreward creeping tide  
With sorrowing song shall lead  
The drownèd to the shore.  
O seas, rejoice and fling  
Through rainbow deep and cave  
A message blithe and brave,  
Till the shell-strewn beaches ring  
In long remembering  
That Death is dead.  
The terror of the rushing storm is fled.  
The cyclone wears a glory round its head;  
And every island has a voice to sing!

## VI

Love of my soul, catch hands.  
Naked and shining,  
Over the brown, wet sands,  
Fingers entwining,  
Run out to meet the sea  
And the foam flying free—  
Purple and blue and pearl  
Where the far clouds begin,  
Where the lithe, white mermaids curl,  
Rise with the waves and wake and whirl,  
Coming in, coming in  
To kiss us with cool joy  
Hailing, "Ahoy, ahoy."  
O, they will bear us 'neath the wave  
Into a blue, enchanted cave  
With coral spread,  
Where youngest mermaids swim serene  
Among the weeds and trailers green  
To Beauty's bed.  
Come, Love, the seas roll on and on  
For ever sapphire, green and red,  
And all the fears from them have gone.

VII

As when I was a child of two,  
O, let me sail there, Love, with you.  
For then, when I was very small,  
I fancied God was kind and tall,  
And sailed His fleets of stars for me  
That my dim eyes all things might see.  
My tiny hands could pluck their light  
As flowers that scent the fields at night.  
I seemed to wear them on my breast  
Like one great rose which brought me rest.  
O Love, within our shell of love  
We two shall sail on seas above,  
Mid mist and light about the moon  
Who nods and bends to us in tune,  
And softly drifting down the tide  
Of smiling stars we both shall slide  
Into the haven of the Blest  
And find again my Rose of Rest.

THE LILT OF LIFE

VIII

Be blithe, my soul, all, all is free;  
Earth, sky and sea at liberty.  
The trellised vine can shade no sigh  
When 'neath the rounded, turkis sky  
The little lambs skip two by two  
Where gaze the wild, wood violets blue;  
When through the corn, the clean, cool breeze  
Wakens his tender harmonies,  
And every blushing flower unfolds  
The virgin passion that she holds.  
O Love, my Love, let us away  
Where all the white, sun-children play,  
And wade the airy, morning seas  
Splashing the light about their knees.  
O Soul of me, so happy-hearted,  
Our life is free,  
From all regrets and sorrows parted,  
Old doubts and little tears that smarted,  
Loosed merrily.  
For Death is dead  
And from his bed  
Adown the hill  
Life comes athrill

THE LILT OF LIFE

With pulsing passion, love and mirth  
Strewing on the waiting earth  
Breathing colours fresh as dew—  
Glad green and gold and clearest blue.  
She pipes her lay, and to her side  
All young and lovely creatures glide.  
The sweetest birds delight her ear,  
Youth and maid in joy draw near.  
The dreaming shepherd leaves his flock  
And, hitching up his slow, brown smock,  
Runs in rapture after her  
Who sets the living world astir.  
With pipe and flute and singing reed,  
Crying the end of Death they speed.  
O Love, away, and you and I  
Will catch her as she hurries by;  
Will dance and sing  
About her ring,  
For nothing now is left to die.  
And out of graves and tombs asleep  
Happy children laughing leap  
Shouting: "Life has come to stay  
All the happy, happy day."

## IX

Who slew grey Death?  
Who stilled his icy breath,  
And broke the fetters of his curse asunder?  
O soul of me,  
O ancient mystery,  
O pulse of woman-wonder!  
My love and I went singing for awhile,  
Then stayed to smile;  
And in his eyes the longing and the power  
Filled the white hour.  
I was a little breathing thing,  
Half-clay, half-cloud,  
Fluttering a feeble wing.  
He called me up to him  
Through joy-mists dim,  
Till all my being was a rainbow-fire  
Lit with the ecstasy of such desire  
It made me one in promise with the stars.  
Then Death came near  
And drew the bolts and bars  
Of the dark house of Fear.  
Out of the place of our seeming  
And singing and dreaming



THE LILT OF LIFE

Thrice he called to my love.  
O my soul, it was I  
Plucking a sword from the sky  
And a shield from the light of God  
Where it shone above  
That smote him down to the sod,  
Set my foot on his breast  
And with holy might,  
Love-sent and manifest,  
Slew him of woman-right.  
O soul of me!  
O ancient mystery!  
O triumph of Joy to Light!

## ARGUMENT

*“And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.”—*GENESIS, II., 7.

*The Woman, having lost Love, finds herself in an interminable darkness. She meets Eve, and they go together in quest of Love. They encounter Aphrodite (the soul of Woman), who accompanies them. Their search is impeded by Pallas Athene (the unsexed mind of Woman).*

*She, wishing to show them how futile their search is, requests Aphrodite to call up Helen (Beauty); Andromache (Wifely Devotion); CEnone (Passion); and Hecuba (Motherly Love). These women bring Love with them from out the Dust. They all turn upon Pallas, who flees, moaning.*

*Eve and the Woman go on alone, meeting the Virgin Mother and Mary Magdalen. These, too, bring Love with them.*

*Left alone again, the Woman realizes the Beauty of her own Soul and Purpose, and finds Love everywhere.*

## MAN AND WOMAN

FAR through a thicket of impervious gloom,  
I wandered, weary, footsore, and alone,  
Bowed with the memories of many griefs,  
To seek in solitude my soul's release.  
Voices of terror followed me and fled  
Deep down the hollows of departing light,  
And, ever and anon, shrill echoes went  
Up to the branches of the sombrous trees,  
Festooned fantastically, here and there,  
With vine and creeper of enormous bulk.  
Full-falling, with a roar, wild waters poured  
O'er jagged rocks and precipices grim;  
And there enveloped in a massive coil  
Of matted nettles, interlaced with leaves,  
I sank imprisoned with a shuddering scream.  
Fiends fumbled at my flesh and strange shapes moved  
Backward and forward in the sightless dark.  
I shrieked in horror, "Set me free again;"  
But the vines bit into my soft, white skin.  
Then loud upon the night there rose a storm,  
Lightning and thunder in tempestuous roar,  
Crashing the trees about me in despair,  
While, dying, ever yet the more I lived.

MAN AND WOMAN

Alone was I, lost utterly to life,  
Though all my senses in an anguish shook,  
And, on my head, each fine and separate hair  
Stung like an arrow thrust into my brain.

“Whence came I here? and how? and why?” I asked.

“Earth, Earth, my sorrow ease, or draw me in.

Where is my love in this Cimmerian murk?

Why comes he not to mitigate these pangs?”

Like mighty pinions pounding me to dust,

The winds uplifted me and crushed me down,

Shouting in scorn of my unhappy plight,

“You have no love in this Death-tortured place,  
Helpless as we that make a sport of you.”

One with the wind, the darkness and the earth,

I burst at length my bonds, and on I fled,

Till, running wildly to more level land

Where, in a mist, I fancied stood my love,

Methought I saw two hosts of children sway,

Face to white haggard face, with weapons keen

Destroying Beauty in each other there.

“Stop, stop,” I cried. But wilder grew the storm,

Whining and roaring with a noise of swords

That pierced my bones like daggers of Despair;

And, rushing onward, mid the hosts I fell.

I cried again and bade them come and take

Milk of white life from me and live once more;

MAN AND WOMAN

But, answering not, they wheeled into the mist . . .  
Men armed for battle trampled over me;  
Their whirring wheels and horses rode me down,  
Crushing Love under them, and Hope and Joy.  
And still I wailed, "Come back from Death to Life;"  
But my weak voice was lost within the storm.

At length the outblown tempest lulled to calm,  
All-sudden silence; and I saw afar  
A single planet shooting beads of fire  
Low down into the gloomy vales of Death.  
I moved to it. A gentle sound of sobs  
Arose upon the air, still cold from rain;  
And by the ruins of a mouldering tower,  
Crusted with broken gems and shards of pearl,  
Whereon the faint light breathed a quiet glow,  
A woman sat, black-hooded, desolate.  
There was no colour in her still, calm face.  
Her eyes were lustreless as if in grief  
Of some lost Beauty of another world;  
And her hands drooped in comfortless despair.  
She lifted from the earth her sad, white gaze,  
Met my wild eyes, and from her slender throat  
Shook the slow sobbings that my ears had heard.  
Behind her, like a god that mourned in stone,  
The ivied column of a temple rose

MAN AND WOMAN

Crumbling in solitude; and lizards crept  
Slow o'er the grasses where the shrine had stood.  
Her suffering called to me; and sinking down  
Upon the sighing leaves I spake to her.

"I am a shepherdess of Earth," I said,  
"Lost in these regions of enchanted dark.  
The silent senses of my soul are torn;  
And nought can give them balm within this place.  
O keeper of the dreariness, take me hence.  
Lead me, O, lead me to my own dear love;  
For the mad airs bemock us utterly  
And I no more know any comforting."  
A mournful sound, as of the wings of birds  
Pursued for centuries through rain and mist  
By darts and arrows of unerring flight,  
Came to my ears, low-beating, bitterly.  
Music, too quiet for an earthly air,  
Swam all about, melodious as sleep;  
And timidly the woman moved to me  
And kissed me strangely on each pallid cheek.  
No word she breathed. It seemed as if those lips  
Silenced for æons could not move again;  
But the warm youth that fed the fire in mine  
Revived remembrance in her quivering heart.

MAN AND WOMAN

“Alack,” she sighed . . . The very air wailed low,  
Gathering that sorrow as it touched the dark.  
Her hair and garment, seeming part of it,  
Shook to the moan, o’erburdened as with pain.  
“Who art thou, woman?” Far I leaned to look;  
But, dim, inscrutable as Isis old,  
She raised a veil of mist about her face.  
I felt my being with short tremors quake  
As, bending to the earth, I cried again,  
“O mother, Mother Earth, give me your aid.  
Who is this woman?” . . . Soft the Dust made cry:  
“Speak kind and low, for she is Eve, my wife.”

I clung to her. I clasped her to my heart.  
“Mother of me and mine,” I gently said,  
“Raise, then, from off this mound your fairest self  
And take me back into my world again.  
There men are laughing softly in content.  
The rose is nodding to a dimpled child,  
Dancing white-footed by the garden wall;  
And on the sand the shell and bucket shine.  
All little lovely things leap to the sky,  
Lambs, leaves and children running, on and on.  
O, take me back again, for there my love  
Goes to the ripple of the dawn’s fresh song.  
Sweet Mother Eve, this darkness stifles me.  
O, lead me out, that I may live again.”

MAN AND WOMAN

“Alack.” Her lips in double torment moved.  
Up rose a stinging sigh as of long pain,  
While at my feet the ever breathing Dust  
Panted some speech that all her body heard.  
She took my hand. She rose from that sad mound.  
How small, how slender were her perfect limbs!  
Beauty, who shaped them, fashioned all so fair  
She fell enamoured of her hand’s own work,  
Remaining there for ever with her dream.  
Then Eve in silence drew me through the gloom  
High up a stony hill, and, pointing down  
Into a valley, dimmed by many mists,  
She showed me all the daughters of the Dark.

I looked. A melancholy train went by,  
Night-haired, night-shrouded down the vapoury way.  
Some strove to reach us; and to these sweet Eve,  
Hollowing her dimpled hands, called long and far  
A deep-voiced message as of strength and hope.  
But they slipped back into polluted depths,  
Falling and fluttering from the stony heights  
Like flocks of bats, fear-winged with helplessness.

“Alack, Alack,” pierced Eve’s long mother-cry  
As hand in hand we hurried down the steep;  
But when we reached the Valley of Lost Souls



A child sat whistling on a lily leaf.  
 He blew us gentle kisses as he smiled  
 And vanished, laughing, through the heavy gloom.

“O Eve, sweet Mother Eve, let us away,”  
 I whispered her; “for I am all afeared  
 Of shapes too strange, whose ominous, cold eyes  
 Recall dead memories that once I knew—  
 Wild melodies, wind-gathered out of space,  
 And the low wail of light. Let us away.”

Her only answer was that low lament  
 That made a night-cold echo in my blood  
 As through the hollow wearily we went,  
 I stumbling, and she treading quietly  
 O'er the cool grass which spake to her in sleep.  
 “O Eve, fair Mother Eve,” I wept at length,  
 “Too bitter chill it grows. Guide me to light.  
 O, guide me to the glow where waits my love.  
 Come back, come back into his realm again.  
 O, give me him whose loss has left me here  
 Wandering for ever through this vale of pain  
 Filled with the oozy odours of old Death.  
 Sweet Mother Eve, my woman-being throbs  
 With the hot tumult of insurgent grief;  
 And out and out my hapless spirit yearns

MAN AND WOMAN

Even to the blazing galleries of God.  
He will be calling me a century,  
Weary with waiting in the little world,  
Moaning and weeping to the empty air:  
'Give back my dearest. Hear! ye awful ones.'  
O Eve, great Mother Eve, will you not come?  
I need him, prisoned in this darksome place  
Which dims my memory with its mysteries."

My holy impulse stirring at her will,  
All-living Eve high raised her hands to heaven;  
But her grave orbs, as if beholding there  
Some torment terrible, with sorrow brimmed;  
And up and up, cleaving aloft the wide  
And stately barriers of heaven, that cry,  
"Alack, alack," lifted and leapt along.  
I shivered, clutched, close-fingered, at her robes,  
And deep within me welled unhappy tears.  
Like some black cloud that on a mountain peak  
Rests ere the storm breaks, screaming, on the earth,  
She stood a moment and then made to fly.  
But the kind Dust held fast her moveless feet;  
And solemnly and slow I heard its voice:  
"Stay, wife, and lead the damsel to her love."

MAN AND WOMAN

She smothered up her moan and bent mild brows  
Low to that Dust in trembling fealty.  
From both her eyes, dew-heavy with their woe,  
Slow drops down-spilled upon the waiting earth  
Which drank the flooding sorrow as it fell.  
I held my breath, seeing my mother stoop  
So to her timeless lord beneath her feet.  
He crooned a quiet love. He gently moved.  
He seemed to kiss each flutter of her robe,  
Each breath, each ringlet of her flowing locks,  
Murmuring sweet-toned and very clear and true,  
As oft my love unto my trancèd ear,  
“Lead her, Belovèd, to her waiting love.”

Straightway she put her arm about my neck,  
Warm, mother-soft, leading me down through folds  
Of icy air and up a snow-cold hill,  
The while I heard a roar of turbid floods  
And moaned: “Where is my love? The very Dust  
Has left us and this quiet snow will freeze  
Blood unto bone. O Mother, keep your word  
To your own love and bring me to my dear!”  
Speechless, she bore me on by icy ways  
It seemed for æons of old centuries,  
Until at last we came by shaggy plains  
Out on an awful waste of stone and rock  
And went down banks of shadowy grass and flowers  
Unto the gloomy borders of the sea.

MAN AND WOMAN

Such desolation since the dawn of Time,  
When from the waving waste of naked mists  
Bare came the earth, no eye of mortal fear  
Had ever looked upon. The sea was cold,  
Grey as a midnight moon in winter rain,  
And still, as if a hand had stayed its life  
With pulseless touch of deathly wizardry.  
A broken boat upon the long beach lay;  
And higher up, where all the shelly land  
Groped to a palm-grove, through the sandy ridge,  
A shattered sail flapped slowly in the wind.  
If ever on that shore the painted keel  
Of trading-craft or fishing-smack ran in,  
No relic now remained. And on the sea,  
Though argosies of gold and pirate barks  
Once filled the morning with the crew's "Ahoy,"  
With hempen cables straining at the pier  
And mast and rigging rattling into speed,  
Now all was silent, save where roved a shape  
Wringing wild sorrow from her weak, white hands.  
Chanting a lamentation of lost lutes—  
Dear lutes that filled the pauses of swift Time—  
She wandered near to me. O, woe of years!  
Her eyes were shut; but her warm hands and feet  
Moving among the darknesses, she saw  
Within her breathing mind each thing she touched.  
Tears stung my sobbing heart. I could not speak;

## MAN AND WOMAN

But Eve, close-looking in my misted eyes,  
Divined my thoughts; and as the night-blind shape  
Glided the lovely lyric of her soul  
Nearer to us, she whispered at my ear.  
So, coming nigh, I knew her where she walked.  
“It is young Aphrodite, Eve,” I sighed,  
“Roaming the seashore in her exiled grief.  
I dare not speak with her; and yet, perchance,  
She knows my love and where he lingers now.  
Call to her, Mother, for her spirit-song  
Would vanish at my voice.” But, as I spake,  
Lone Aphrodite came upon us both  
And paused. I sank upon my knees, pain-faint,  
For a long sorrow hung about her limbs  
And her rose feet glowed out like bruised flowers  
From the cold sand. I gave them of my tears,  
Praying her ease. And when I looked again  
I saw that Eve, in sorrow at the sight,  
Had drawn the goddess to her mother-heart.

Then slowly, sadly, in a music old,  
I heard a ripple of low song flow forth  
From the curved lips, red pencilled as on stone.  
“Who calls me back from my lone self again?  
I mind not now my home within the Dust,  
For the warm thought of my first love is sweet

## MAN AND WOMAN

As when among the blossoms flushed with dawn  
I saw him piping to his quiet flock.  
I sighed all day upon the hills of heaven,  
For the gods wearied me with sport and play;  
But the bright shepherd in old mornings green  
Filled me with longing for his singing soul;  
And so upon a dawn of yellow light  
Down to his mead I came, and drank his life.  
O Women, I have suffered in content  
Who filled the happy mortal with Love's pain.  
But bid me not recall my miseries,  
The cries of those I loved and could not help;  
The sweets departed and the joys expired;  
For my wild heart has made me partly earth  
And I have lost my great celestial power.  
Sometimes I think I was most woman, Eve,  
Who let her senses overrule her thought  
For the quick pleasure of the body's needs.  
Be kind as your lord Dust and bid me not  
Remember all again. But who is this?"

Her wandering hands, feeling before my face,  
Half touched and half passed over me. I spoke.  
"I am a shepherdess of Earth," I said,  
"Lost in these regions of unhallowed dark.  
The storm encompassed me. Strange phantoms came

## MAN AND WOMAN

Out of the wilderness of howling wind  
And led my steps to Eve, who seemed as lost  
And frightened as myself in that strange place.  
And so I wept aloud like some small child,  
And bade her lead me to my world again  
Where the white beauty of the spring is ripe  
And the green meadows frolic to the sun.  
I bade her take me to my own dear love  
Who seeks me even now through dell and down,  
By cities old and villages pink-piled  
With sunset clouds and rainbow radiance.  
But nowhere yet has light come unto me,  
Save that, when now you sighed in that wild way,  
I thought my love was leaning to my heart,  
Kissing the white, smooth glory of my skin.  
Dear goddess, he has slept upon my breast  
And worshipped me so often and so long.  
Here has he left the fragrance of his breath.  
Here his soft hand has strayed, and whispering lips,  
Touching this throat, low-sighed and sighed again:  
'Girl-goddess of my heart, I have a thought  
Not even Aphrodite was as you.'  
You weep. O cease." I turned to Mother Eve.  
"Find we my love, for he will ease all this.  
His tenderness will open these shut eyes,  
His pity and compassion soothe the flow

MAN AND WOMAN

Of such unchecked distress. O Mother Eve,  
See how she sinks. How have I pained her heart?  
O, my hard tongue has hurt the spirit-soul  
That wedded rapture to the early Dust."  
In sorrow Aphrodite seemed to droop,  
But the Dust opened its soft mouth and cried:  
"Comfort, my fairest. Take her to her love.  
I called you not to earth against your will."  
A clear light fell on Aphrodite's face.  
She goped and, smiling, lit us through the dark.

Thus we three passed. I, shepherdess of Earth—  
Mere mortal in my form and shape and guise,  
Wracked with the fear of all earth's latest woe,  
Sickness and sorrow, and rank pain and death—  
Sweet Mother Eve, within whose gentle hands  
Slept the immortal anguish of the race;  
And Aphrodite, she whose spirit-self  
Breathed through us both, and in her dark eyes held  
The long-lost gleam of Beauty and Delight,  
Which, fallen from Heaven, was dead to loveless  
earth . . .

We turned to seek my love. And now 'twas I  
Seemed leading that pale pair from out the gloom;  
For their white hands warm-folded in my own  
Filled me with courage; and the happy Dust,  
Kissed by my feet, made murmurings of hope.



## MAN AND WOMAN

I smiled: "He must be coming this way now,  
For all my blood is pulsing fire and song.  
I hear him far and far away, yet near  
And nearer still he comes. Perchance he leaves  
The happy world, and singing moves this way.  
Listen, sweet women, Listen! 'Tis his step."

I felt a sudden shocking of my nerves,  
Stabs as if jarring elements awoke  
Riot of ruin in my blood. I shrank.  
Eve trembled on my right, and on the left  
The hand I held closed fast and firmly tight  
On mine; while a high shriek gripped at my soul  
With, "Hide me, hide me from her awful sight."  
Startled, I stood and listened; but I heard  
Nought save their cries; and at my feet the Dust  
Rumbled discordance of dire agony.  
"What monster and what spectacle of Fear,  
Dread horror and false Shame comes nigh?" I asked,  
"That I alone keep strength in this wild hour?"  
They clung to me. They hid their faces white  
Close, close upon my breast; and, looking up,  
As one struck blind with lightning, I outcried.  
For, striding manlike o'er the rimpled sand,  
Her brazen helmet flashing shafts of fire,  
Her argent shoulders shimmering o'er a shield

## MAN AND WOMAN

On which flushed figures of young heroes shone,  
A warrior goddess came. About her helm,  
Gold serpents coiled in ire, and her long spear  
Lit all the darkness with such sudden light  
I bowed my knee for reverence of her power,  
Beholding there such strength of chastity  
As only wisdom in her high heart holds  
When Thought bends Force unto her holy Will.  
Loud hissed the serpents, spitting spume of hate.  
Whereat Eve shuddered out that old "Alack,"  
And Aphrodite, shivering closer still,  
Moaned "Hide me; there is war between us yet."

"Such glory of great womanhood," I said,  
Gazing wide-eyed upon the goddess there,  
"Should not so terrify us." But she laughed  
Like bells of brass across a blood-red sea.  
And loud I wailed, "O, it is Pallas come,  
Breeder of Wisdom, Chastity and Power,  
War-goddess—neither man nor woman quite—  
But smothering in her virgin breast the fire  
Of both. I am afraid, afraid as you."  
So we three clung together, cold with fear,  
While the white virgin-woman mocked us thrice.  
But for an instant only; for I scorned  
The withering anger of her eyes' hard blue;

## MAN AND WOMAN

And, sudden, drawing full to regal height,  
I faced her, fearless, flinging words like flame:  
"O Woman, in whose hands the spindle turns  
To tattered chords of broken hearts, stand by.  
Pale virgin, adamant of mind and heart,  
These two have loved and suffered as have I;  
But I have scorn of you, breathing as two.  
Why lift the spear when your white fingers itch  
Hot for the spindle, and your woman's soul,  
Mixed in the running thread you first unwound,  
Yearns for the hearth and home? Oh, those stern lips  
To which the flute first flew, eager for song,  
Curl contumelious in their lack of warmth.  
You would be man, yet to contending arms,  
Vindictive, fled in woman-jealousy.  
You raged because, a morning long ago,  
The beauty of this blinded goddess charmed  
Man to her soul—the man you could not win.  
Nor shall you now win any fear from me.  
We go to seek my love, my true, true love,  
Who blames nor chides nor censures anyone."  
Pale Aphrodite raised her sightless eyes.  
At which cold Pallas turned in questioning;  
But stirred to wrath, and tortured that a girl  
Should so presume, strode angrily to me.  
"Be silent, shepherdess!" She mocked. I kindled.

MAN AND WOMAN

Fast through my veins crept tides of newer scorn.  
But she spake on. "I do pollute my soul  
Thus to confer with clay corruptible.  
Bend down your woman-ear unto your lord  
The smooth, slow-breathing Dust; and moderate  
That too presumptuous tongue. On you as him  
Subjection I impose, and homage due."

I leaned to Eve. "Sweet Mother," low I breathed,  
"She speaks all Truth, for never mother-breast  
Fostered her infancy. Full-armed she came;  
Being all reason, mind and subtle force.  
She ne'er will feel our pangs. O, let us on.  
How should she know aught of my dearest love,  
When no man yet has hung above her lids  
Nor tasted sweetness on her pouted lips?  
She does but wear the semblance of our shape,  
Limbs that are lithe in look, but bloodless, chill.  
At her hard breasts no babe has ever slept  
Nor set a dimpled hand upon her cheek!"  
"Woe, woe," pale Aphrodite cried again,  
"The memories, the memories are mine.  
O Pallas, leave us. Turn your eyes away;  
Enough of sorrow has my conquest won."

MAN AND WOMAN

But Pallas brandished high her spear, and loud  
Her armour clanged, as, seeming not to hear  
That which she heard, her accents brake again.  
No woman softness charmed them, nor sweet song.  
Courage had hardened chastity in her  
To such firm virtue, only strength seemed good.  
Mind ruled her heart and close-control was queen  
Of body, soul and being to the depths.  
"O Cytherea," rang her cold, slow tones,  
"I speak not to these women of the Dust,  
Vouchsafing audience to that which drowsed  
Sense-easy in the languor of content  
Before you came. Such speech were impotent;  
But unto you, whose punishment is meet,  
I speak, because of knowledge you have fear.  
How well do I recall that golden hour  
When first to high Olympus glade you sailed,  
Wind-blown; and how we all rose worshipping—  
Not jealous, for your round, sweet beauty shook  
All malice into tears of bliss. You fell.  
From that imperial realm of cloudy power,  
Guarded by gods, regal, omnipotent,  
You turned your eyes to baser things, and down,  
Deep down to this abominable Death  
Where dust to Dust returns eternally  
You dragged the light, the glory that was ours

## MAN AND WOMAN

Till in your fall all gods were as the Dust.  
But Man, whom we had watched so close, and hoped  
By counsel of calm thought and argument  
To lead by paths divine to greater deeds—  
Deeds of the Will made servant to Control—  
That far above the tempest and the stress  
His soul should soar triumphant in command,  
Leaned to your luring lights, and, learning love,  
Forgot the way . . . Forgot . . . and left you blind.  
Your hair is dank. Your eyes will never more  
Watch the dawn spread along Olympian lawns,  
Nor your fair feet trip down the ancient dance;  
For Man has violated vow on vow  
Who gave to weakling Love life's empery.  
What would your Paris say could he return  
And see you where you stand beside that girl,  
Bold as a boy in speaking out to me,  
And sick with Love's impatience of desire?"  
Her voice was hard but sorrowful; and Eve,  
Moving to me, low-whispered, "Let us on."  
I could not stir. My eyes were moist with dew,  
And all the wind muted with Love's despair,  
Lifted the sad, long, locks of the blind queen  
And mingled them with mine. Ah, how she wept!  
Yet never drops from the shut eyes fell down.  
And I cried shrill, "O Pallas, stand aside.

## MAN AND WOMAN

Go, ply your woman work in quiet peace,  
Nor make reproach again; for by my love  
I'll vanquish all my woman-tenderness  
And match myself with you upon this sand.  
Strong am I shielded with my own white breast.  
Your spear is pointless. What my love has pressed  
Of his dear strength into my heart has force  
To fight and triumph in Love's cause divine.  
Take heed, O Pallas, how you stir a girl  
Whose soul is fired with such a love as mine!"  
"Truth," whispered Aphrodite, "She speaks Truth,  
And still I cry it in my agony:  
'I love Man still above the golden gods  
Who chose me, shining from their lustrous throng  
In Beauty empty as a painted vase.'"

Thereat was Pallas angry; but the Dust  
Stirred at our feet. Deep in my heart I smiled,  
Saying: "O, heed her not, companions dear;  
My love is near and he is seeking us,  
Since we could never find him in this dark.  
He comes. He comes. The Dust has murmured it.  
What matter that I lost myself this hour?  
What matter that the storm wept tears of blood,  
And in the valley of the dark, low down,  
I saw the hosts of children fight and die? . . .

MAN AND WOMAN

My love is coming. He will seek us out.  
He will not leave us to this insult here;  
And these stern words of Pallas will be naught.  
Let us go on and meet him as he comes.”  
Great Pallas frowned. The golden serpents coiled  
About her helmet hissed again. She cried,  
“Peace! purblind minion. Look on Love you laud  
Blinded and bruised by battle not her task,  
But drawn to it by zeal to save her joys  
From my indomitable will and law.”  
“O, spare me, spare me,” Aphrodite moaned.  
“Spare you?” The ominous sharp question shook  
Wrath as tumultuous as thunder-claps  
Upon the startled banners of the night.  
“Summon the ruined shades of yesterday  
Who passed through your weak will and learn if they  
Know aught of this girl’s love; for proud she seems,  
Heaven-yearning, though earth-born and obstinate.  
If any of that pallid company  
Who, being dead, know all, can bring her here  
Tidings of him she seeks, I shall relent,  
Put up my shield of war and ply instead  
The woman loom of peace. Recall them now.”

But Aphrodite moaned. “No, no. Bring not  
The lonely curse of the lone dead again.  
All sound would hollow to the dirge of death



MAN AND WOMAN

At Helen's haunting voice; and, O my soul!  
Each woman whose dear lord fell in the wars  
By your great enmity compounded long  
With Earth, would torture me again. Forbear.  
O, being wise in ways of man, lead us  
Unto this damsel's love, for so the Dust,  
Great Eve's great lord, having strange hold on me,  
Hath ordered it. I conjure you by Zeus,  
By all the memory of my first glad hours  
In his high realm, spare me the dark-eyed dead.  
O, the Greek women and wan Trojans' wives,  
Whose lords I could not save because of you,  
Know not this damsel's love. For I, myself,  
Until I met her with Life's mother here  
Ne'er knew her. But her longing for her love  
Drew me from the cold deeps wherein I slept,  
And my heart moved to her. O, lead her on.  
Mayhap you have her lover cold in pain  
Upon your battle-field; for I perceive  
By the hot vigour of your pulses now,  
War wakes in some unhappy place; and, where  
Such torment of dull danger stalks and stabs,  
Man stays. O, do not stoop to strike him low  
As once my loveliest, in Ilium.  
Spare him for her sweet sake who called to me,  
And for great Mother Eve who bore the child."

## MAN AND WOMAN

Sullen and silent, Pallas looked at me.  
Her eyes scorched all my soul, and woke therein  
Contempt for her too solemn strength and power  
Where passion could not leap, with heedless joy,  
Down the calm cheeks that lips had never touched.  
And my heart ached for her who spake for me  
So much that I replied, "O, fear her not;  
Dear Aphrodite, bid the women come.  
For great Eve mothered them as she did me;  
And this same Dust whereon we stand in awe  
Has kissed their feet and known them wise and fair.  
Pallas is jealous still; and that poor fault  
Turns all her law to tumult, and makes vain  
Her talk of deeds. My mother here is yours,  
Through the earth-mother of your man-made child,  
And she is more than Pallas and her scorn."  
And Eve confirmed my words, all dignified,  
Creeping a little where the Dust was thick;  
For she felt murmurs of sweet joy and sounds  
That thrilled within it to her listening ears.

"The Dust, my husband, is awake," she said;  
"He sleeps not, nor can Pallas silence him.  
Let Aphrodite call my children forth  
From the closed tomb that you may speak to them."  
So, comforted by Eve, who, meek and still,

## MAN AND WOMAN

Surveyed the warrior goddess with mild eyes,  
Through the dark worlds blind Aphrodite called.  
It was a soft, sad wail, low-toned and slow,  
That pealed aloft till all the winds and seas  
Took it up tremblingly and bore it on;  
While Pallas crossed to Eve, but shrank away.  
That matron-breast, that full, broad mother-brow  
Sent sighings of earth-longings through her frame.  
But Eve spake very gently: "Warrior queen,  
I am the mother of all living men,  
And if I spake not when you chid my child  
'Twas that the cunning serpents on your helm  
Recalled the world-old memory of sin.  
I, too, have fallen as this goddess blind  
Out of an Eden fairer than you knew;  
And men have fallen with me, since my lord  
Was but the Dust and is and shall be still.  
But hither come my daughters; see them rise  
Up from the grave of Dust. Here Helen comes,  
CEnone, and Andromache, pale yet  
From her wild weeping with the Argive hosts.  
And last comes Hecuba. O, hear them speak,  
If they know aught of this earth-woman's love,  
Lost to her, so she says, for centuries."

MAN AND WOMAN

With wondering eyes I watched the moving groups  
Bear slowly down to us across the sands;  
And all the while the sea set up a moan  
Like ages of dark sorrow broken loose,  
Making dread Pallas start, since well she knew  
That cold sea, soaked in silence for so long,  
Still stirred to Aphrodite; and those shades  
Traversing down the misty midnight shores  
Were Love's, if ever Love owned aught of Life.  
How calm, how quietly the women came,  
Feet-weary even as I, reluctant, pale!  
But when they reached us I was all amazed  
At her who led them, for her gracious mien  
Made the divine companions seem as ghosts.  
Stars rippled at her white foot's stately fall  
Lighting that black, interminable realm  
With rainbow-radiance of pellucid air  
Till the great sea, the living Dust and sky  
Sang in communion with an ancient joy  
Of her and all the beauty that was hers.

Helen it was, fair as the first June morn,  
Brows braided with great pearls and that gold hair  
Clothing her wondrous body like a cloak.  
In awe I gazed, as often in a room,  
Lighted with many jewels, where there comes

## MAN AND WOMAN

Through rows of painted cheeks and pink-white limbs  
A lovely woman, good as beautiful,  
And the room gasps, hushed as by heavenly fire.  
I marvelled not that they who followed her  
Bent as in worship; for her least white thumb  
Was fashioned to a music of the flesh  
Beyond all sculptors' dreams of long ago.  
Within her eyes, grey-sweet beneath their lids,  
The evening and the morning met and kissed.  
Midnight was there and sorrow of the dawn,  
Yet she was neither sad nor mournful bent,  
But as a goddess stepped erect and tall,  
Holy in body as in true mind wise.  
And with a laugh that brought a sound like waves  
Wimpling among the rushes to the shore  
She looked at Pallas as in questioning,  
Bowed to eternal Eve, and, passing me  
Unnoticed, let her long gaze rest in tears  
On Aphrodite's too unhappy face.

She made to speak, but from the troop of shades  
CÆnone brushed beside her and, aloud,  
Lifting her troubled voice as in dead years,  
Cried with the woeful anguish of her soul:  
"What does the wounded goddess need of me?  
Methinks CÆnone might be left in peace

MAN AND WOMAN

That the hot smarts of your false pride and sin  
Have time to cool in her safe home of Dust  
Where Paris is nor hers nor Helen's now  
Nor any other woman's, and the feud  
Of gods is all forgotten. Do you come  
That you may open all my wounds again,  
As on that wild, white day when your ripe charms  
You hid within fair Helen's breast and wooed  
Her from her husband's side to my dear love?  
I hated you that hour; but Death makes wise  
The river-god's wild daughter; and I see  
By your pale face and frail and shuddering limbs  
You too have suffered. What is then your will?"  
I answered: "O CEnone, it is I  
Who seek my love. Speak if you know of him."

"I know no love save Paris, my own lord,  
Who kept his sheep upon the leafy hills  
As I came singing through the morning air,  
Younger than he who was so young and blithe.  
The oldest shepherd on old Ida's peaks  
Nursed him for me; and flushed with happiness  
He kissed me as we ran among the woods.  
O, the sweet playtime, born of childhood sport!  
We raced the morning wind; and in and out  
Among the dewy grass and strong, straight pines

MAN AND WOMAN

Shouted and chased long laughter into life.  
Now he pursued, now I. O wild, wild youth!  
O joy of rippling blood and rushing hearts,  
Singing to madness underneath the leaves  
I laced about my breasts to please his play.  
Till that close night he drew me down to him  
And I heard nothing save the Mysian air  
Shouting in triumph as his happy lips  
Kissed me for joy, for boyish joy and love.  
Then sudden, strange unearthly pleasures struck  
Straight through my breasts and fluttered maddeningly  
My whole young being through, while Paris cried  
'Kiss me, CEnone, take me unto you.  
I die . . . I die . . . Kiss me again, again.'  
So, leaning over him I saw him faint  
And took him to my soul and learned Love's pang.  
O memories too dear," she sighed in tears."  
And Pallas, curling her white virgin lips,  
Drew her clear shield farther away from her—  
As if the sound of passion, deep and true,  
Surrendering to Love its blood and wine  
Contaminated her and bred pure scorn.  
But Aphrodite hid her blinded eyes,  
And the hot anger at CEnone's heart  
Cooled quickly ere her slower speech began.  
"You sent that shiver through my frame of Youth,

MAN AND WOMAN

O goddess, and your pulses were in mine  
As down I drew my lord and drank sweet pain  
From his soft breast, virgin till then as mine—  
Else would we two in happy, childish love  
Have sported long on Ida. Woe, oh, woe!  
The hate of Helen bit into my bones,  
For her chaste beauty took him from my side;  
And Paris gave her all his sweetness then—  
And mine—mine too. For did he not take me,  
My love, my passion and my life with him  
To Menelaus' court. O goddess pale,  
How easily do women follow you  
And burn their souls out in your woeful dream.”  
She turned from Aphrodite sick at heart.  
“O cruel,” she cried on. “He left my side.  
Barren and aching were my heart and soul,  
Barren my breast and barren my red lips,  
While I roamed up and down among the pines  
Beating my head upon my burning hands,  
Wailing, ‘The Greek, the Greek feeds on my soul.’  
And, as I wept, through all my skin I felt  
Lashes of hate and lurid jealousy  
Till then unknown in happy heart and breast.  
O goddess, how I loathe you for your share.  
And now you call me that a love-sick girl  
Should mock my breaking heart, again, again.”



“O dark C enone, blame her not,” I said.  
 “I never knew your Paris nor such pain.  
 But many a time beneath the green, old trees  
 And in the rounded garden of our home  
 Have I known such a lover—yet not such—  
 More sweet and tender and more true to me.  
 My playmate never once has touched my soul  
 Nor would without returning me his own;  
 Nor any fairer beauty, wise and bright,  
 Could woo him from my side who holds me first.  
 Blame not sweet Aphrodite, whom great Zeus  
 Made freer than his winds and gave no guide.”

C enone sighed; and soft, Andromache,  
 Low-bowing her small head in heavy grief,  
 Full-wearily to Aphrodite spake:  
 “I have but little pity left; and yet,  
 Because upon the fatal field where late  
 My lord with stern Achilles madly fought  
 You stayed to help, I do approach you here.  
 I should have thought that all my suffering  
 Had spared me from this bleak return to earth.  
 You were my friend and Hector’s many years.  
 We warmed your altar with our love by night;  
 And all the day I toiled for my dear lord,

MAN AND WOMAN

Feeding his horses, and, if need there were,  
Shining their brave, bright armour, that the straps  
Might as they clung to their sleek sides give strength  
For my true love, to bear him safely through.  
But, O, how bitter was your false return,  
When from the bloody field the furious Greek  
Dragged my dear lord, my life, my Hector, dead.  
I knew no satyr-dalliance of mad lust  
As this wild oread left to mourn her mate.  
I was his wife, O goddess, and I sat  
Still with his child upon my knees in peace,  
Broidering with golden thread the purple robes,  
Keeping his hearth and home with gentle pride;  
And on that dire and dreadful day I stayed  
Heating his bath and waiting with the oils,  
When from the Scæan gate the shouts came thick  
'Hector is killed. Woe, woe is Troy'. . . I ran.  
I gathered up my robe and fled hot-eared  
Along the walls, and saw the priceless limbs  
That I had thought to bathe torn through the dust—  
The hair that I had hoped to comb, blood-red,  
Tied to Achilles' wheel; and round and round  
The screaming walls three times they dragged him,  
slain."

Hereat she drooped. But weeping spake once more:  
"I felt no more from that day to my last.

## MAN AND WOMAN

I wept not when the Argives slew my child  
And bore me captive to their hated land.  
I felt no more, being but shell of earth;  
For Hector took my soul with him to rest—  
My dearest lord, true husband and chief friend.  
So, goddess, bid me speak not any more.  
I never knew a man save my dear lord,  
The flower of Troy, my Hector, blood of me.  
How should I know aught of a young girl's love,  
Who stands there weeping now as if I roused  
Life in her heart?" "And so you do," I said.  
But she heard not; at which I turned away.

Then Hecuba, the grey-haired Trojan queen,  
Bent from her shoulders to her shuffling feet,  
Tore from her worn, lean breasts her bondage robes  
And cursed the goddess in an anguished hate.  
"What power," she said, "false goddess, have you left  
That from my grave you bring me weeping forth  
To beat again the withered breasts at which  
My children's lips have plucked? Where is my king,  
My Priam, who was father of my flock?  
O, when I struck upon these shrivelled paps  
And begged my boys to cease, he stayed them not  
From the grim fight. I saw my children die,  
Till, as the dull voice of an aching womb,

MAN AND WOMAN

I cried in memory of all my pangs:  
‘My sons, my sons! O, give them to me, Zeus!’  
But agony on anguish crying down,  
None spared them; so my sons were killed for you.  
I curse you, goddess, for your triumph then.  
I curse you for the sons of all the land.  
I curse you in my life and in my death,  
For Love that can breed war is only Hate.  
I curse you in the Dust which gives me rest,  
And shout its curses for my sons—my sons.  
I offered up my life and soul for them.  
I loved them, taught them your sweet tasks to do;  
And, for this Greek, you sacrificed them all.  
O Zeus, Zeus!” High she flung her arms aloft—  
“That all the walls of Troy were here again,  
And every stone a voice to cry its curse  
Thick on this woman-goddess, ‘Hate! hate! hate!’  
That nevermore might earth behold her rule . . . .  
It is in vain. She brings me back from death  
Because I loved my sons and king, and she  
Blew the first breath of Love into them all.  
O cruel Love! O sense beyond all sense!  
Feeling too terrible to live or die!  
Young child,” she turned to me, “give up Love’s quest.  
Sorrow and tears, dull agony and woe  
Await the watcher on the trembling tower.  
O Zeus! my sons! my sons! Torn is my heart.

MAN AND WOMAN

Come back! come back into your mother's arms!  
My babes, my boys, my little ones come back.  
Too cruel love, too bitter, bitter pangs!  
Zeus! Zeus! my sons! my sons!" Crying, she fell.  
"Forbear, forbear! O Hecuba, forbear!"  
Bright Helen rushed and soothed her to her heart,  
While drooping Aphrodite clung to Eve,  
Faint with the curse of that old mother's woe.  
"'Tis Pallas who so killed your boys," she said,  
"She who loves naught of women; but will stand  
Stalwart as now in any bloody plain  
And smile as Youth and Beauty fall by Might.  
Come, curse not Aphrodite; for my heart  
Warmed to your son, my Paris, ere she came;  
Even before he chose her, fairest one.  
Before this Trojan oread kissed his limbs  
I loved and worshipped him in vales afar.  
Before the dawn first shone on Ida's peak,  
Before Olympus thundered or the throne  
Of Zeus rose on the wreck of Saturn's realm,  
Before the Titan fell or Orpheus sang  
Did I love Paris. For in blessed isles,  
Behind the breaking of the midmost dawn  
He sang his passion through my listening soul.  
He, being perfect lover, poet-king,  
A shepherd by his will, a prince of love,  
Came to me there again at Sparta's court.

MAN AND WOMAN

Hearing of Ida from his singing lips,  
How could the bond of Menelaus hold?  
I loved him for his beauty and his song—  
Beauty to Beauty has since dawn been wed—  
And was he not full worthy woman's love  
Who spurned the spear and dagger for my heart,  
Who mocked at Power and Wealth and kingship too  
For the fresh sweetness and the truth of Love?  
Prince and yet shepherd, how he mocked the gods  
Offering him Asia, all its gems and gold.  
I never knew but one love. It was he  
Who spurned the purple for the rose of peace.  
I gave myself to Love for Beauty's sake.  
Be brave, great mother, for your great son's sake  
Who slew for you your Hector's vaunting foe."  
But Hecuba, pouring the balm of dust  
Fast on her hair, spake in her moaning voice:  
"My sons, my sons! my babes, my boys, my boys!"  
Swiftly sweet Aphrodite with a sigh  
Fled into Helen's arms, and at her touch  
The blind eyes opened and the goddess saw.

I felt the Dust tremble about my feet.  
Voices seemed breathing, "Beauty wakes to Love."  
And ashen Pallas, staring at those eyes,  
Translucent, clear, took instant fear and shrank.

MAN AND WOMAN

“Let her not fly,” cried Eve, “for she has said  
That she will set her mighty spear aside  
And answer to her woman-soul as we,  
Knowing my youngest daughter’s youngest love.”  
“O earth-small women,” Pallas, sneering, said,  
“Ruled by your craven hearts with Love and Guile.  
My mind shall triumph o’er eternal Dust,  
And all your lovers and your sons be mine;  
For, having minds, how should they know this maid?”  
“Nay, mine,” shrilled Aphrodite, “they are mine.  
Love, Love is greater than all thought and will.”

Then the wan women brightened as the sky  
Cleansed by the rain. The Dust rumbled delight.  
“Stay, stay,” I said, “and let me swiftly speak.  
These women know my love; for in each tale  
Some memory of him I catch and hold,  
He being dearest, sweetest of all men,  
Winner of every battle that his soul  
Charging at midnight, or at dying dawn  
On the fierce plains of Reason and Resolve  
Wins with the armour of his naked heart.  
By the low Dust in which all have their birth  
Let us be strong, so that we rid mankind  
Of this pale image of a woman here.  
Pallas, away and be your woman-self!

## MAN AND WOMAN

Let down the stern, thick mask of might and find  
Beneath the battle triumphs and the strength  
Your woman sweetness, that the goddess true  
In your great limbs all womanly may shine  
With a mild courage that is more than force.  
Master of all, be mistress of yourself,  
Guarding the sweetness that is wisdom's best."'  
She frowned. She fought with us. But we were strong,  
Breaking her spear and shaking down her shield—  
We—all the women of the weary earth,  
Filled with high love to dare the mighty task,  
To rive the spirit that had wrought us wrong—  
A man's thought batted on a woman's soul.  
She fought a space, then vanished with a moan—  
The first short woman-wail of her defeat.  
A shouting, shrill with joy, went up from all;  
And when the air grew finer with that joy  
Those women with a holy meaning sank  
Back to the Dust from which they late had come,  
But where the lovely Helen sank to earth,  
Rose-cheeked and laughing in her youthful prime,  
Young Aphrodite smiled upon us both.  
Then she too passed; and I and Mother Eve  
Were all alone once more upon the shore.



## MAN AND WOMAN

But now a fairer light broke o'er the land,  
Fragrant with paradisal balm and myrrh;  
And the sea sang through moving folds of blue  
Along the beaches and the shelly caves.  
Nor was the air too cold, nor yet Eve sad.  
"I have not found my love," I said to her,  
"But, throbbing wonder into heart and soul,  
I feel fine fires that thrill me through and through.  
My love is more than friend and love to me,  
Than son or husband, sweetheart, lord or mate.  
He is all these and god as well, I think.  
These women did not know quite all my love."  
Eve smiled. "Because of me they did, my child.  
In me your happy love once had his birth.  
But question you these daughters coming now."

Lights hurried over all the land and sea.  
Dawn flushed in many-coloured rings of flame.  
The sand about our feet grew green with grass,  
And birds were whistling merrily o'erhead.  
Slowly came two white women to us there.  
The first was but a light, or seemed as such,  
And round her hair the aureole was spread.  
The other, with a placid smile and sweet,  
Attended her; and in my deepest joy  
I saw the Virgin Mary moving down,  
Where that great warrior goddess late had stirred.

## MAN AND WOMAN

And for her shield she had her milk-white breast  
On which the Christ Child once had meekly lain;  
And for her spear, that white and tender arm  
Which oft had cradled Him to gentle sleep.

“O Eve,” I said, “too holy is this place.  
I must not stay.” But swift, she answered back:  
“Mary is my own daughter, whom God gave  
That primal sin of Woman to redeem,  
Which I, the sinner and the temptress, wrought  
Within the old, sweet garden of the East.  
Be not afraid. She is the mother-heart  
Of woman’s soul, and she must know your love.  
She gave a Son that all might live in Him,  
As all must die through my lord Dust and me.”

Gravely with her that other Mary came,  
Shriven by Love. The Virgin beamed on me;  
And Mary Magdalen spoke, softly sweet:  
“What do you seek, O little one of earth?  
What need have you of me, whose name the world  
Once made a scarlet shame upon its lip  
Till He came by—the Man of Nazareth?  
Painted and smooth my cheeks, stained red as blood,  
And all my long, thick hair scented and decked,  
I hurried when I heard that He was come  
Into Jerusalem again from far.

MAN AND WOMAN

“Amid my servants I awaited Him,  
Hidden a little lest the pious blame;  
Then went along the street drunk with high hope;  
With happy thought of woman witchery.  
Far off I saw Him coming with a crowd,  
A motley throng who hung upon His words,  
Men, women, children—a vast multitude.  
Nearest to Him were little ones. And some  
I knew; for there was Mary, likest me—  
Called after me when that good name was pure—  
My sister’s child. One tender finger-tip  
Of that wise, gentle hand she held in hers  
And laughed from out her curls at some soft word.  
Beyond the city walls He went to speak  
In Simon’s garden; and they hurried there,  
Scoffer, disciple, scribe and Pharisee.  
A woman near me laughed in coarse disdain.  
His mild ecstatic look, and that meek mien  
With which He paced the placid way, had moved  
Her scorn of that she could not understand.  
But I laughed not, nor did I speak at all.  
The sinful wish that shook my wretched heart  
Died at His sight. Maybe it was the child  
Holding His finger that so silenced me.  
For, when the crowd drew nearer in the street  
And at first glance of me the matrons stern

MAN AND WOMAN

Raised cries of loathing and of woman-hate,  
He stopped them; and He bade me come to Him.  
Each step I took, young blood flushed through my veins;  
Sins slipped away from me and were no more;  
And, ere He touched me with that gentle Hand,  
All evil thoughts were gone and I was pure.

“I know not how such miracle was wrought;  
But, looking up into His face, I loved.  
And all at once I heard the bubbling speech  
Of children; and once more I was a child,  
Dancing with little naked feet in play  
Upon the leafy cedar lanes of home,  
Running beneath the olive down the hill  
To meet the sunny river laughingly.  
It seemed my very flesh fell from me there  
As I breathed in the air which held His breath.  
I breathed it, mark you that. I touched His feet;  
And nevermore felt any pain of pulse,  
Passion or hungry sense gnaw at my heart  
For food of shame? I went as one reborn  
And followed the clear prints of His loved feet.  
Henceforth my palace in the cypress grove  
Was cold as its white marble; and the flowers,  
Roses and lilies set with myrtles dark,  
And all the fragrant purple violets, brought

MAN AND WOMAN

To me from Rome by lords of that rich realm,  
Called me amongst them, murmuring 'Leave this place.  
Set the rare jewels on the temple steps,  
Put on a simple raiment, Magdalen,  
And lay aside the Tyrian robe and pearl.  
Tie the loose latchet and go through the streets  
To Him; for He would rather tend and fold  
A lost lamb such as you than all the rest.  
Go swiftly forth.' And so I followed on;  
And found Him in the garden shades beyond  
The broad, sun-silvered olives in strange peace.  
Afar I stood and watched Him as He spake,  
Although He saw me not. And last, one night,  
His Mother, coming through Jerusalem  
With friends and neighbours from far Galilee,  
Saw me, and, pausing, said all wonderingly;  
"O, fair are all the maids of Nazareth,  
But whence came you with such a loveliness  
As never yet by well or village way  
Was seen in Israel since Bethlehem  
Smiled through its barley sheaves on happy Ruth?"

"My father was of Magdala," I said,  
"But I am she whom every matron shuns;  
For I had sold my beauty at a price  
With traffic of long shame. O Woman, peace,

## MAN AND WOMAN

The Beauty and the Goodness of my God  
Breathe through my face and form because your Son  
Spurned not the worship of the meanest soul,  
Which, born from His, has given me true life—  
Beauty of earth and sky and sea once more  
And all sweet things I knew in childhood's days.  
She put her arm about me, and we went  
Back through the soft light of the quiet streets;  
And thus I dwelt with her until the end."

She paused and the white Virgin raised an arm  
Folding her close as often long ago.  
"My love," she spake again, "was God in Man  
And my soul thrilled to His; yet never reached  
Higher than His fair feet which trod the dust;  
But, as an ocean, panting from the deeps,  
Hugs but the thinning line of some white beach,  
Contentedly I touched them and was glad."  
She said no more, but, softly bent her head  
And with the Virgin trembled nearer Eve.  
Then the First Mother looked into those eyes  
With tears that loosed a common sorrow-sob.  
The Magdalen came closer yet to me.

I said: "My love has thus redeemed me, too.  
Beasts bit into my flesh and lapped my blood  
Since it was young and sweet. But he came by

## MAN AND WOMAN

And, looking in my eyes, said: 'O, my soul,  
Sorrow to sorrow calls. Come, follow me.'  
He heals no multitudes; and yet, I think,  
Healing my wounds and stifling all my sins,  
Passion and anger, hate and fear and fire,  
His is the miracle of your dear Lord.  
I, too, once couched upon a harlot's bed.  
Men knew my body as a place of joy,  
Felt where the muscles yielded balm of sense  
For the coarse feeders to find plunder there.  
I learned my trade and knew it, passing well,  
So that the buyers sought me far and near  
Whispering: 'She is cursed, inspired and filled  
At once with all earth's hell and all heaven's earth—  
Such heaven as they could know, such hell, such earth.'  
From such a place my love took me and raised  
Life from the dead. But he was merely Man,  
Weak in some ways and full of little faults  
As often I think God Himself must be  
Since He can understand and leave it so.  
And though I love him till my death-in-life  
I shall not reach his height. That height God knows,  
Who measures all with an unerring eye."  
She started; and those women on our right,  
Seeing each other as the other's self,  
Born of one God through some all-holy love,  
Drew nearer yet until they seemed as one—

MAN AND WOMAN

The mother of all mortal men, and she  
Who made them all immortal through her Son.  
I marvelled and the Dust set up a song  
Of mystic murmuring about our feet.  
Then Eve, with softest whisper, said to me,  
"I think your love is very near this hour."  
I felt strange shivers through my body pass.  
The Virgin and the Magdalen withdrew;  
And Eve, slipping her arm about me, sighed:  
"I, too, must go, but you, seek out your love,  
My youngest daughter, who are true and brave."  
She laid her hand upon my shoulder then  
And, with a cry, unlike the others fled,  
Sinking into the Dust whereon she stood.

I was alone and naked, spent and pale.  
I trembled at the sight of my warm skin,  
So fair, so smooth; and, looking at my feet  
I saw that they were small and pink like shells.  
My limbs were lovelier than my two eyes  
Ever before had seen upon the earth.  
My round white shoulders of immortal mould  
Caught my soft hair afloat in filmy light.  
I moved. I seemed more airy than the air,  
Poising upon it in a misty dream.  
As oft a cloud about the mid of day  
Swings in the west all lost in happy dreams



## MAN AND WOMAN

Of the wide earth and sea which mothered it,  
So I seemed moving, drifting slowly there.  
And, lo, the sea beneath was singing blue.  
The great earth faded to a pleasant plain  
Where all things living in a golden haze  
Mingled like rainbow banners on my sight.  
No flowers, since Eden flushed its thornless rose,  
Glowed with such glory on the branch and stem;  
And tall, old trees about the wide, swift sea,  
Slept in contentment of diviner ease.  
On, on I passed as blithely as a bird  
That flits in rapture from the topmost elm,  
Ruffling his feathers with the twinkling leaves  
Tossed in the laughter of a yellow spring.

“Heigh-ho, heigh-ho,” my glad lips made a sigh.  
“Where linger you, my love? O, come to me.  
I am more beautiful than all your dreams.”  
Wild, wilder leapt my blood to sudden fire,  
While nerves and veins felt all the grief and joy  
Of those great women who had come to me.  
Yet glad was I, most happy and most free.  
The airs laughed round me with a girlish song.  
“Love, love,” I cried, “Where are you? O come forth.  
I know my beauty and I claim your soul.”  
Then with a faint, low sob I caught my breath,  
For at my feet the Dust moved; and I heard

MAN AND WOMAN

“Come down to me. I am your love, your own.  
You are my wife, my love, and in the Dust  
Adam, your husband, sleeps.” I thought I heard  
Laughter of women in among the stones;  
And, sudden, feeling breasts and being yearn  
To some unearthly passion of the world,  
I bent and kissed the Dust and murmured, “Love.”

“Dear Heart,” it said, “hear but the old Earth speak  
And she will tell you of my love for you.”  
I trembled as I knelt with fingers white  
In the thick Dust which through my pulses ran,  
Breathing articulately low and rich  
The ancient epic of all gods and men:

*“I am the mother of the mortal race—  
Mother and father, the eternal one.  
Immortal life am I, immortal death,  
Life in all death, through everlasting love.  
From me the least and greatest have their birth;  
I am the earth, the footstool of my God;  
Sun, mist and dewdrop gather but for me.  
God in the sunbeam, God within the air  
Breathes through my being life and death at once,  
Ever and ever carolling me on.  
I am the world-wife, man’s companion soul.*

MAN AND WOMAN

*I am the husband, guardian of all love,  
Striving and moving on eternally.  
I am God's dream, His island in the sea,  
Floating and drifting on to Light and Hope,  
Beauty more beautiful than Life or Death.*

*All lands are my lands, from the north to south,  
Mountains of Lebanon and streets of Rome—  
Lakes of the last lands, islets of the first,  
Dream cape and headland to the end of Time.*

*All songs are my song, voice of man and maid,  
Thrush call and linnet lay and skylark trill;  
Bird on the top bough, cricket in the grass,  
Girl in the lighted chamber, laughing song.*

*All dreams are my dreams, since a dream began—  
White light of Heart's Desire, long hope of Heaven.  
Deep in my round heart throb the dreams of old—  
I who have listened to the world's white wish,  
I, who have waited watching for the light,  
Taking the great tears, drinking up the small,  
I who have harkened softly in the dark,  
Hearing young visions with the old sighs pass!*

MAN AND WOMAN

*All thoughts are my thoughts, for I spin and spin  
Heart-fire and mind-fire through the floating air,  
While from my fabrics and my tresses dark  
Man builds His paradise and God away."*

Thus breathed the Earth and made a mighty moan  
As the slow Dust heaved gently to my heart.

*"So do I travel through the happy air  
Light-winged and soft-songed, sad with happiness.  
Blood tears my heart sheds; salt tears, my eyes  
Dancing in circles years without an end.*

*All souls are my souls, for I keep them here,  
Singer and spearman, saint and little child,  
Helen, CEnone, Hecuba, and Eve,  
Paris and Priam, Adam and your love.  
No one can take his godly gift away—  
Beauty of Truth or laughter of Regret.*

*All they who labour linger in my womb,  
Mine to return them at my master-will.  
Brother-soul, sister-soul, meet as one in me.  
Nothing can leave the Dust from which it sprang.  
Dust-true it lives, in truth of Dust it dies.  
All years I sing the triumph of the Soul:—*

MAN AND WOMAN

*One earth and one sea, moving, moving on.  
One song and one dream, one eternal thought,  
All lands in one land and all songs one song.  
All men in one man, God within us all.*

*He wrought and made me Who has put forth all:  
Meadow and city, castle, field and home.  
Back to the Dust's heart all will pass again,  
Dust to the soft Dust, till the mighty Good—  
Soul of the true soul triumphs over all."*

The low voice ceased and to the Dust I cried:  
"Too strange is this strange, earthy voice of yours  
Speaking of thought behind the thought I know,  
Dream in the God-dream ere the planet came.  
I want my love. O, speak of him, sweet Dust,  
Speak of the human in the human way.  
If you are he, O, speak your heart to me.  
Tell me your story, you whose body keeps  
All those sweet women who have late passed here."  
Softly the sad earth sobbed, "I am yourself."

I rose and spake aloud in trembling wrath.  
"O Dust of Earth, be all that you may sing,  
All that has been or ever yet shall be.  
I move but as a simple singing girl,

## MAN AND WOMAN

Nor versed in mysteries. I know you not.  
Speak by my mind and by my heart and soul,  
Not by my God's Who is above us all.  
Set your philosophy to tunes I know,  
Paint it in colours of the hour I breathe,  
Not yesterdays or morrows that may be.  
For I perceive Eve's hands are in my own,  
And Aphrodite's soul leans out of mine;  
But I am woman of my own white world  
And my dear love is but a singing man.  
Take off your veil, great Father-Mother Dust,  
And let me see with simple, human eye  
The man and woman breathing under you,  
Not ghostly phantoms of frail wonderments.  
Give me your heart-pulse. Let me feel your tears.  
Lean to me. Fill me with your joys and hopes."

O woe, O woe that I should thus have called  
Deep to the Earth; for silence fell on me  
And all the land grew desolate again.  
No more the talking Dust caressed my feet,  
But blood was there and eye-balls torn and gashed  
Of men and women, babes and innocents.  
Up from the Dust which through their bodies pressed,  
High shrilled a voice, "We are Earth's oldest woe.  
In her we lie. Look down. Look down and see  
The Dust is red, red, red with blood of life."

MAN AND WOMAN

I screamed. For shrieking Babylonian hordes,  
Persians, Egyptians, Greeks and Scythians pale,  
Roman and savage with soft, broken bones  
Rolled in the horror of the bloody Dust.  
Then loud Earth lifted up her voice again :

“O Woman, all these woes are under me,  
Be wise and treat me gently. Walk in tears.  
My myriads are yellow, white and black,  
Nearest me black, and so more piteous.  
Seek not to fly from me who hold your feet,  
For you, white-footed, with your eyes of stars  
Are mine, Belovèd, by your body's dust.  
I love you, but I love my feeble, too,  
My helpless, ignorant and sore-oppressed.  
I love my highest and my least at once.  
The singing poet and the slave asleep  
Are one in me and beautiful through you,  
Dearest, and fairest that my soul can dream.”

I wept and greedily the Dust drank in  
My tears, as but an hour ago I saw  
It take sweet Eve's; and I was mute and cold  
For thinking how the ages finer grow  
In me a shepherdess of silver song.

MAN AND WOMAN

I felt slow reverence and holiness  
That issued gently from the blessed place  
Which once I knew and yet could never know;  
For, suddenly, a thought came singing there  
How God was with me in the breathing Dust,  
Loving me, guiding me to His true sphere.  
I thought, "He is with me and my dear love,  
So that He speaks to us from everything;  
And all the women from the first of time  
Dying in Eve, return in me again.  
Because I feel the passion of the Dust,  
The mist, the midnight, and my own warm heart,  
Because my soul is strong and very wise,  
Aged as is the morning, young as night,  
My God who moves in everything I touch  
Even to the dim Dust had His Mind in mine."

I sat and, clasping tight my naked knees,  
Covered my body with my lustrous hair,  
Alone for ever in that quiet place  
And yet companioned by the whole wide world.  
I saw the beauty of immortal eyes  
In every creature that my wise heart knew  
And peace came over me with balm of joy  
As I mused softly: "All that is, is God."  
And, musing thus, I felt the old Earth heave



## MAN AND WOMAN

Heart to my heart again; and all the Dust  
Frolicked to mirth, in happy, childish play,  
Saying: "Let all the people laugh again,  
For I am joyous under all my tears.  
O, speed the pipe and put the drum away;  
The silken suburbs of my towns are fair.  
The kine are free. The lamblings bleat in peace.  
And, where young children with loose flying curls  
Roll dimpled bodies down the dancing hill,  
The green grass ripples into summer mirth,  
While through their happiness I laugh, I laugh.  
The bubbling ocean with its shipwrecked crews,  
Old gold and silver and unpolished pearls,  
Buried deep down beneath its haunted heart,  
Leaps up in merriment where children splash  
Beside the shore, and never stays to fret.  
It runs a river round my island home,  
And, like a ship, all merrily I sail  
White-winged, green-prowed, with freight of new  
content.  
Sorrow to sorrow moves, and joy to joy;  
So my soul smiles as swiftly as it fears.  
Leaves fade and fall upon the moth-pale Dust;  
But butterflies about me flutter gold.  
All pass and die; but with a merry laugh  
I wake them fresher from their sleep again."

MAN AND WOMAN

“O love, O love,” I whispered closer now,  
“Holding the secret of all life and death.  
My own dear love is near me. Let me go  
And take him tidings of his own true heart.”

I fled away, but as I onward ran  
By winding ways and many pleasant fields,  
“Love, love and love,” came shouting from the Dust.  
My feet danced laughter and my waving hair  
Blew to the breeze, while sunbeams caught it back,  
Binding it o’er with fire of flowing light.  
My bare white hands upraised like ringing bells,  
Shook on the air a milky melody.  
I found long vines and wound them over me.  
On gleaming thighs I lightly tied them round.  
With purple violets and young, white buds  
Of mountain roses trembling with the dew.  
They seemed to know the skin they met and kissed.  
Thus on I moved, too happy for myself,  
Too full of joy to know my own, sweet end  
Till with a cry of “Love, I come . . . I come,”  
I sank like all my sisters into dust.

That ecstasy of bliss I felt no more;  
I thought for years sense wholly died away,  
Till I was once again in that dark wood  
Moaning and tortured under vine and bough.

MAN AND WOMAN

There were no lights, no outlets; as before,  
The more I cried, the duller grew my pain.  
Trying to rise, I sank in agony,  
And fell, deep-bruised, to bite the stinging Dust.  
Again, again, I saw the children fight,  
Blood-red and matted with the gore of Death.  
They cried and struck, and, inarticulate,  
Knew not what either said, but stabbed and slew,  
While shapes like women wringing moaning hands,  
And angels tied, who could not reach the strife,  
Bowed aching heads at spectres of red Death,  
And Famine-Pain that stalked along the land.  
From fighting children fast to men they grew,  
And back again. Savage and huge, brute man  
To small child shapes passed on eternally,  
Warring and warring on, yet coming back,  
As babes whose loose curls dripped with mother-tears.  
Slowly my agonies of mind died out;  
My heart upburst and loud I heard a cry,  
"Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"  
I saw the Christ above the tumult move.  
Cold calm swept over me to hear Him weep,  
Raising again that helpless, human call;  
And in the midst, arose the vision old  
Of Rachel mourning children that were not.  
"Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" . . .

MAN AND WOMAN

“Stop, stop,” I moaned. “O, cease your strife. Cease,  
cease.”

And like a flood of memory rolled by  
All women of all Time mourning their slain.

The hosts passed on. My tears had numbed my soul;  
And, looking out upon the blood-black plain,  
I saw a babe hold up its little hands  
And cry. I heard its passionate complaint:  
“Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?  
My God, my God, hast thou forsaken me?”  
I burst my bonds, and, running wild with woe,  
Pressed its soft face with kisses of my soul.  
O God, I held its softness to my heart  
And felt the warm compassion of my soul  
Lift it to knowledge of eternal Hope  
As I moved, weeping, back into my world.  
It smiled. It lifted up its dimpled hands  
No longer moaning; and the laugh it made  
Whispered of love that linked the living man  
Unto the woman who had made his song.

“O soul of Him Who died for humankind,  
I see,” I said, “Life’s meaning new in You.  
Men war. Men war for ever, but You come  
Because a mother-heart is left to love.

## MAN AND WOMAN

They never change, the people of the Dust.  
Rachel is weeping still and Hecuba;  
A thousand wives a Hector mourn again  
As Aphrodite and Athene strive  
Through the bruised souls of men and women too.  
But, You are safe, O little child of Love,  
That ages touch not with their misery.  
Mary, a mother, brought You into light,  
Loved of the best loved, dearest of the Dust,  
To whom all Marys, hypocrite and saint  
Still look in worship as eternal Love."

With smiles enlightening its beaming face,  
The holy child pressed kisses on my cheek,  
And sent me dreaming into some sweet sleep  
From which I prayed that I should wake no more.  
But, opening up my eyes to meet the day,  
I found my love, who bent above my bed  
Kissing my cheeks and eyes in sacred fear,  
While a young child upon my bosom slept.  
"A woman, love," he breathed, "too sweet, too fair—  
Beauty and Light and Hope your Pain has brought  
Out of immortal darknesses for Man.  
And I, remembering yet some travail pain,  
Before the dark delirium closed in,  
Felt all my being stir to him and said:  
"You were not lost?" He smiled and bade me sleep.

Then, when I waked, all fever being passed,  
 I saw the child and, leaning close to it,  
 Touched its small body in a humble awe.  
 It breathed. It opened up its calm, blue eyes  
 Till my heart sobbed some ecstasy of Pain.  
 I whispered softly to my pale-cheeked love,  
 "It lives and I live and you live through all.  
 This is our very selves, our thought, our dream."  
 And then I marked how tired was my love,  
 Drained of all colour, fainting to my heart.  
 "I have been with you through the deeps," he said.  
 "I know," I answered him, recalling there  
 How Death's delirium had led me forth  
 Where all my senses crowded to a pang  
 Breeding new sense in passion terrible.

So, dreaming there in that contented pain  
 That follows fever of great travail pangs—  
 Brain-blur and heart-throb, sickening to Fear,  
 Where Birth escapes from out the jaws of Death—  
 I thought on all the wonders I had seen,  
 And that God taught me in my mother-hour.  
 Sweet tears rained down upon my little child -  
 Which my dear love wiped tremblingly away,  
 Fearing to touch me, since my wails and cries,  
 And those wild terrors shrieking in the dark,  
 Rang in his ears till he seemed almost I.

MAN AND WOMAN

He spoke in murmurs that I scarcely heard:  
"Life is all one, Pain, Death and Dust are one,  
And you and I, wife, one for evermore."

I looked about my room, and left and right  
Glowed the glad Dust in happy beams of sun;  
In cotton frocks within the wooden press,  
Wrought in fine thread and lavendered with care,  
All delicate as dew, that Earth had made,  
Laboured for, borne that I might know delight.  
Dim canvas, picturing the walls of Troy,  
Clung to my walls near crucifix and ledge,  
Whereon the Virgin nestled close her child.  
And everywhere I saw the Earth in them,  
For hands of Dust had fashioned them from Dust.  
My books, full-thoughted with their dreams of old,  
Clasped close the souls of those who panged for them,  
Deep in their golden bands; and much I mused,  
My arm about that true mate of my soul,  
To see how Beauty met me everywhere,  
Comforting, holy from the floor to roof.  
My love leaned low. I kissed his pale, cold cheek,  
Weary from vigil. Looking in his eyes  
I saw indeed the scars of many wars,  
Deep wounds that yet were aching from God's pain.  
"The world-war still is at the gate," he said.  
"They hunger and they die; and Honour stalks

Bleeding but beautiful amid the shame."  
 "I know," I said. "I saw them and I strove  
 Breast-full to feed them, but they fought and died.  
 Love, love, the pain! They kill. They kill and die;  
 And, even I, who screamed these hours away,  
 Blinded with Pain, know little of their woe,  
 Save what my bones gave back at their wild cries  
 As the white children grew so red with blood."

And as I spake, I thought, in gentle rest,  
 How simple life and love and all things were,  
 How from the Dust had come, sun-drawn, myself,  
 My child, my love; and how about the room  
 Beauty to Beauty gave eternal grace,  
 In picture, book, old ornament and urn. . . .  
 Too happy Dust, I thought, that loves to dwell  
 In scent and flower. . . . I felt all humbled there,  
 Knowing the grain of Dust I am and was.  
 Touching my child, I said unto my love,  
 "How human and how simple is our God!  
 How sweet, how little and how beautiful!  
 How all at once the sorrow and the joy  
 Move from the agony to laughter clear!  
 But Man and Woman go a dark, cold way  
 Of blood and tears and darkneses of pain  
 To reach new paths and find a truer light."



MAN AND WOMAN

And then, I scarce know how, but swift it seemed,  
The wood-brown bed on which I lay in pain  
Grew up again to lofty cedar trees.  
The blankets soft and very clean and sweet  
Drifted again into the wool-white sheep  
That flocked together in the cedar's shade;  
And the white linen was a field of flax.  
And I, no longer bound by tightened bands,  
Lay 'neath the trees ungarmented and free,  
My sleeping babe upon my weary arm.  
Panting was I, but strong; and happily  
My own dear love held water to my lips.

The sunny river running by the flax  
Held all the songs that ever lips had sung.  
The wind that rippled it a clear pipe blew  
Sweeter to me than ever ears had heard.  
The kind, low Dust held all the thoughts of life.  
And that blue mist that hovered o'er the grass,  
Green with wise-growing, kept a dearer dream  
Than ever yet my youngest mind had known  
In the great anguish or the greater joy.  
My love embraced me as we lingered on,  
In that calm Eden of the cedar grove,  
Knowing and feeling all the pangs of earth  
Yet smiling over them in wonderment.

MAN AND WOMAN

“O love, it is the greater Eden here  
Given to us who are the meek of heart.”  
I lisped the words; and to my tranced ear  
In melody divine he answered me:  
“Heart, God comes down to us in our small child.  
It last has seen Him; and as we two cleave  
Close unto each through pangs and pains we go  
Back to the newer Eden from the dark.  
Our child shall leave this garden where we sleep  
And wander on into still fairer realms,  
And find at last the mighty Truth and Light  
Of the first garden growing in the last.  
Remains but this, O truest mother-wife—  
Friend of my bosom, blood of me and mine—  
A man and woman and a little child,  
Love-swayed and hallowed, body, mind and soul,  
Bind God to earth and earth to all His dreams.”

## SONNETS OF MOTHERHOOD

### I

ONCE, through the woods I heard a voice ring clear,  
Saying: "O woman, can you never rise  
Up from the thralldom of your lover's eyes  
And seek the regions of a higher Seer?  
Poor little slave, who will not drop a tear,  
Low tinkling sonnets to eternal sighs,  
Is Love so prodigal of Paradise  
You cannot worship in another sphere?"

I looked upon your mouth, your eyes, your face;  
And all the currents of my blood ran fire,  
"Here," said I softly, "is my work, my life,  
Till the last trumpet echoes into space."  
And breathing to your soul that twin desire  
Love drowned the murmurs of insistent strife.

SONNETS OF MOTHERHOOD

11

If you should think I sing too oft and strong  
Of love that brought me trembling to your feet,  
'Tis that I fear the grey days, moving fleet,  
With marching destiny to mar my song.  
How many suns have set to work us wrong  
While your sweet kisses drank my life complete,  
Till, like a shadow of yourself, I beat  
The bars of heaven where the great loves throng?

O, let me sing until my song resounds  
From hill to hill, o'ertopping consequence.  
Let the winds bear it to the yearning call  
Of far-off waves beyond the ocean's bounds;  
Lift it and waft it in a joy intense  
To thrill at last its triumph over all.

SONNETS OF MOTHERHOOD

III

Last year I was a shepherdess who lay  
In greenest valleys of contented Ease,  
Resting my head between your happy knees,  
While all my lamblings wandered far away.  
High on the hills the little leaves at play  
Frolicked in folly to the running breeze.  
Rocked in the passion of such melodies,  
How could I hearken to the clash of Day?

But from the pastures of the higher blue  
Came music calling in a finer tone—  
Magic of joy in jubilation shrill—  
I wept to hear it all the morning through.  
And, climbing up aloft to vales unknown,  
I found you lying in the shadows still.

SONNETS OF MOTHERHOOD

IV

Love, Love, the sun-hour darkens, and the night  
Musters her starry senators of Space.  
Lean to my bosom. Let me kiss your face  
While the moon swims along the mountain height.  
Fled is the miracle of morning bright.  
The steeds have broken from Apollo's trace;  
Dulled is the glow, and Silence spreads apace  
The brown pavilion of her chaste delight.

O, must the flame into the darkness fade,  
Fire sink to ashes, every leaden eve?  
Must Love and Life in mists of cold desire  
Pass to the destiny of Death's wide shade,  
Leaving a moon of memory to grieve  
Where the red sun lit Passion to his pyre?

SONNETS OF MOTHERHOOD

V

Ah no, the sun is in another land  
Leading on lovers to their daily deeds.  
And yon pale moon above the clover meads  
To-morrow morn will flood an eastern strand.  
So trick we Time. Dear, hold my tingling hand,  
And hear this secret that my yearning speeds—  
Our Love to Life at every hour proceeds  
If we so mind to let our hearts expand.

Our sun of Love is at the full of noon,  
Our hearts and minds attuned to its desire,  
Stirred by the wind of summer, blowing wild  
Thro' all free flowers that own its gracious boon.  
O Love, retain it in the holy fire  
And the warm glory of a living child.

SONNETS OF MOTHERHOOD

VI

I'd have you love my body as my soul,  
Praise it and magnify it night and day,  
Knowing its sweetness blossoms out of clay  
With tremulous movement to its spirit goal.  
These arms perchance have clambered branch and bole,  
These feet have run from many beasts of prey;  
But Love has led them to a clearer way.  
Moulding white rapture from apparent dole.

O, let my body be your soul's delight,  
Your mirror true of Beauty most-esteemed,  
That looking on its form your lips breathe low:  
"This is herself, her soul within my sight."  
So read it over as a book you dreamed  
In boyhood's fancy many a year ago.



SONNETS OF MOTHERHOOD

VII

The river said: "I'll sing a song for you  
Older than Darkness, younger than the Light  
That leaps with joyance from the grave of Night  
Through purest twinkle of the early dew."  
I smiled and cried: "I know a song more true  
That my love carries in his ears' delight,  
Heard oft in Sicily and vales dove-white  
Where the wild lilies of the ancients blew."

For all the echoes of the horn and shell  
From Jubal's harmony to Pan's shrill lay,  
Your soul has gathered through your ears, made strong  
By timbrel, harp and little singing bell.  
So come, my love, make melody to-day,  
Be swift, be swift to sing me into song.

SONNETS OF MOTHERHOOD

VIII

Make me the melody of meeting palms,  
The roundelay of little running feet.  
Strike me a measure to a trembling sweet  
Of the mouth's laughter and the fingers' psalms.  
I know of music in the ocean calms—  
A siren singing where the long tides meet.  
I know of lyrics in the leaf's long beat,  
But the child-chant is symphony of balms.

Sing it to me. O, sing it to my blood. . . .  
Through chord and fibre of my being run  
The liquid quavers, and the pause and turn  
Of every note in its seraphic flood.  
Sing on that anthem of the sea and sun  
And the deep dreams that in your being yearn.

IX

Dearest, my spirit wakens into light  
More lovely than the floods of sun that stream  
To affluent fountains, where the rainbows gleam  
Smitten with beam and banneret of white.  
My skin is laughing in a long delight.  
Each pore of it, a little mouth in dream,  
Kisses your own till both our bodies seem  
Stricken with sweetness into holy might.

The young, young life of bird and bud is here  
Warm in my blood, and, like a tingling tide  
Striving to give my spirit its release,  
Each drop makes anguish for a happy tear.  
Yet Love, all agony is set aside,  
Breathing contentment in a breeding peace.

SONNETS OF MOTHERHOOD

X

I walked among the flowers that bend their heads  
Low to the earth and back again to light,  
Hearing them prattle of their blue and white—  
Violet and jasmine in the bordered beds.  
They whispered them of every wing that weds  
Fragrance to fragrance in the dusky night;  
And, seeing them, I knew another sight,  
And saw them bowing where all Beauty spreads.

I touched each petal with the sunbeams flaked—  
Roses and pansies of the early morn,  
Lilies that lilted of the moon's light grace,  
And left them hushed when all my joy was slaked;  
For in the garden of my soul, God-born,  
Each flower made beauty for my child's soft face.

SONNETS OF MOTHERHOOD

XI

When all the world toils out its busy play  
With leathern loops that every quiet spurn,  
Where Force makes Form at oily twist and turn,  
I walk the beaches where the wise waves sway.  
There by the borders of the sea I stay  
As the great breakers, rolling in eterne,  
Silence the roaring of the cities stern  
To the far chuckle of their flying spray.

What speed voluminous of rhythmic power!  
What rushing laughter ringing to the shore!  
I hear, I hear all echoes of the earth,  
Changeful and constant in the whirling shower  
That leaps the cliff and leaves, behind the roar,  
A sound of sobbing merging into mirth.

SONNETS OF MOTHERHOOD

XII

O Love, I wandered by the sea this morn  
And saw the shells upon the beaches strewn,  
Lined with the lyric lappings that the moon  
Woos from the deep with every tide upborne.  
White, pink, and creamy as the early corn,  
I gathered them unto the far-off tune  
Of some sea-bell that rang a drowsy croon  
Of singing freshets in a depth forlorn.

I held my breath; for through the mellow maze  
Came silver airs that made the sea resound  
From shell to shell all human joys and tears.  
I sighed in tremors of delicious praise;  
And knew two shells within my body bound  
Caught all those wonders for my child's sweet ears.

SONNETS OF MOTHERHOOD

XIII

Accept my body, Dearest, as a gift,  
A precious casket of the purest pearl,  
Flushed with the earth-old ecstasies that curl  
From dancing joys and into heaven drift.  
My soul for key, I give it glad and swift  
To your safe keeping as a guileless girl,  
And faint with wonder as my senses whirl  
To tender longings that in dreams uplift.

I have one jewel in the casket rare,  
Dearer than pearl that ever diver drew  
From cool, green ocean in the deeps of death;  
Brighter than ruby and than beryl fair.  
O, take the key and guard it close and true.  
The gem is living, and you give it breath.

SONNETS OF MOTHERHOOD

XIV

What longing passion of all life I feel  
Moving within me now serene and slow,  
As through my blood the rushing ages go  
Like some old carol with a new appeal!  
Down cell and bone the busy æons wheel  
Dew into dust, and dust into the glow  
That we shall meet upon these limbs of snow,  
Ripening by Love beneath my body's seal.

All earth has sweated for this child of ours,  
A thousand ages in a thousand ways.  
Our God has put upon its little head  
His highest excellence of unbound powers.  
All He has done, all His eternal days,  
Breathes fresh as dawn in this His dearest bred.



XV

The Builder took his stones and reared them high  
To glowing symmetries of arch and dome,  
Crowned with the massive masonry of Rome  
And the line glory of the Grecian sky.  
Singing he worked, the hope within his eye  
Lifting him upward from the stone and loam  
To the wide ripple of a marble foam  
Rising obedient to the chisel's cry.

On cupola and cornice speaking Power,  
With decorative curve of leaf and line,  
He wrought for centuries, but never piled  
O'er his choice cusp and sunny trefoil flower  
Even the semblance of that God-design  
In the mind architecture of a child.

SONNETS OF MOTHERHOOD

XVI

Architect, who work in living clay,  
Moulding by melody of thought and dream  
Lintels of eyelids, breathing trave and beam  
For the Lord's house—your soul, you build to-day.  
You set the bricks of being to the sway  
Of mellow music that the mind-pipes stream;  
And let your dome of Reason flame and gleam  
On the young columns of your son to stay.

You rear the city of yourself in me,  
Flooding, as once sweet Orpheus from his lute,  
The rising walls of Troja, wind-unfurled,  
Your Love with such eternal harmony  
That the soul's pillars from the dust blown mute,  
May grow and glow the glory of the world.

XVII

Listen! I hear a tapping at my soul.  
Can you not hear it, O my Bosom-heart,  
Like leafy tips of summer that o'erdart  
The streaming silence of a shelly shoal?  
O Love, I swoon. I lose your close control,  
Drifting and falling from the world apart,  
Mute to the margins where the life-rills start  
Wakened by Love to fathom Beauty's goal.

Hush my hot spirit in your own to sleep,  
Lulled by the music of these growing limbs.  
The soft chords tighten all the cadence through  
And airy measures in my being creep.  
O Love, my soul with very wonder dims.  
Almighty God in me is singing you.

SONNETS OF MOTHERHOOD

XVIII

The spider wove his kingdom in the sun  
With silken yarn and little, random threads.  
Through shining jewels that the rainbow spreads  
A wheel of silver in the morn he spun.  
What pattern of pure light, so lightly done!  
Some witch's spindle o'er the blossom-heads  
Ran in and out, as if for fairy beds  
Fate worked a fabric that was known to none.

Weaver of wonder! How he toils in vain,  
Nor ever yet can turn the wheel you spin,  
With threads of Love upon my heart in tears,  
Making the beauty of white youth again,  
As on the frame of me you now begin  
The moving epic of a million years.

SONNETS OF MOTHERHOOD

XIX

Now all my senses have a double sense,  
As this young life about my heart-fire sings,  
Bringing to earth the everlasting things  
God pours on woman as a recompense.  
Great miracles of being, bright and tense,  
Bloom from His garden of imaginings;  
And long and deep, on happy seraph wings,  
They fill my body with a dear suspense.

O blessed trinity of motherhood!  
These tiny eyes unopened in me yet  
Feed on the light of you, my spirit-spouse,  
Through every marvel of each passing mood;  
And in the passion of this wonder set  
Our God Himself in holy travail bows.

SONNETS OF MOTHERHOOD

XX

What will this child be, dearest, growing fast  
Out of myself and yourself, chaste, divine,  
Fluttering contented in the inner shrine  
Of my young body till it comes at last?  
Will it bring echoes of the lovely past,  
Dreams of old wanderings by road and vine,  
Lilting me lyrics that perhaps were mine  
In a far age that never woe o'ercast?

All that enlivens me must fashion it,  
All that I whisper to my soul and do;  
The constant thoughts that in a moving bliss  
Mellow the memories of oldest wit.  
Dearest, the fire that fused me into you  
Breeds on to Beauty since your first man-kiss.

SONNETS OF MOTHERHOOD

XXI

In Babylon they built a massy tower  
To search the stars for some account of Time.  
Sweeping the heavens with their eyes sublime,  
The bold astrologers watched hour by hour.  
Death mocked their arrogance and way to Power.  
Dust were their destinies; but, Love, we climb,  
Mingled with magic in our married prime,  
To the star-regions that no fears o'erlour.

Dust is that ground on which we build to God,  
Month after month, the living tower we mould;  
But Wisdom, lighting all the windows wrought,  
Glimmers on valleys of the heavenly sod.  
And on the stairway with His dreams enscrolled  
God strives through us to reach His highest thought.

SONNETS OF MOTHERHOOD

XXII

By what strange pathways did I come to you,  
Down what old woods, what mountains cool and high  
Stretching their spreading forests to the sky  
To touch the passing anguish of the blue?  
Perchance I danced in Tempe with a crew  
Of slender virgins to a piper's sigh;  
Or, when a war-cloud thundered, hurried by  
Thinking to find no soul like yours all true.

Love, Love, encompass me. I think I came  
Last to a shrine, and left my spirit there,  
Which lifted up a carol for your ears  
And ceased not singing till you breathed my name.  
O, hold me close. This child that I must bear  
Shall haunt those pathways all the coming years.



SONNETS OF MOTHERHOOD

XXIII

“Lead me again unto Romance,” you said,  
And as you spoke Romance herself came by . . . .  
Her rosy bells upon the midnight sigh  
When in her temple love and youth are wed.  
Here are the steps, dream-misted. Softly tread.  
This is the doorway where her fancies fly.  
O, turn the key and in the rich room spy  
The fairy feasters and the charmed bread.

You muse, Belovèd. Kiss me once again.  
Don Quixote jostles by with spur and steed.  
The red-capped Robin and his yeomen go,  
Their yew-bows twanging down your own dear brain.  
Love, you have given them to me in need.  
Your child will thank me when he wakes to know.

SONNETS OF MOTHERHOOD

XXIV

How many holy women mothered me  
And brought me to perfection for this hour,  
When from my being all the living power  
Of sweetest woman should at last flow free?  
Æons on æons on a loving knee  
Some woman rocked me in her scented bower,  
Till my soul bloomed an everlasting flower  
Calling with fragrance to a singing bee.

You came. You saw me. And because in you  
A myriad mothers all their love had spread,  
Those holy women since the dawn of day  
Gave you the promise of a master true. . . .  
Dearest, that bee unto the flower was wed  
When your song fitted with my humble lay.

SONNETS OF MOTHERHOOD

XXV

Dear, you have taken off your youth for me  
And sent it singing through my heart and soul,  
By breathing measures, as the low winds troll  
Echoes of earth and murmurs of the sea.  
O Love, I tremble as this flowering tree,  
Where the rose ponders o'er her crimson bowl,  
Pours out the perfumes that in longing roll  
Rich to the music of a musing bee.

The rose is listening for its leaves' soft fall  
Light on the meadows where the young blades shoot.  
Hush, at the carol of the wakened morn  
All life is listening for the living call.  
O turning leaf! O little, running root!  
Listen, sweet love, you, too, are being born.

SONNETS OF MOTHERHOOD

XXVI

You longed for Fairyland. I know the way.  
Come down the garden. It is near, my sweet.  
But wander lightly lest the fairies fleet  
Skip far away to meet the end of day.  
“Where are the Little People of our play?  
In flower and grass?” Your happy murmurs beat  
Low on my ears. O, stay your trembling feet.  
Cling closer yet and I shall breathe their lay.

Boy of my heart, young singer of the sun,  
Queen Mab and all her maidens are abroad.  
Brown Puck is calling with a pixie hoot;  
And elf and fairy in a frolic run.  
Dear, neath my bosom is their treasure stored  
In a child's laugh and little running foot.

## XXVII

O, not alone I weave this miracle  
Of glowing spirit from my body's zone.  
With every moment of the life unknown  
You feed the glory of a growing cell.  
All day I think of you, and night must tell  
Dreams of my dreams unto your heart alone;  
So, seeing you, I take you, O my own,  
Into my child where first you wrought Life's spell.

Dearest, as much as I, you breathe in pain,  
Breeding yourself—your very soul from me  
By look and sign, soft word and action strong,  
And all you longed for in its form regain.  
I am a humble haven where we three,  
Father and child and mother, make a song.

XXVIII

O Master of all masters, painter-rare  
Limning the canvas of my soul with light,  
Beside the passion of this picture bright  
You draw on me, all else seems painted air.  
Your mind as brush, you blend with lover-care  
God-colours of the eyes and lips' delight,  
And shade the delicate desires of sight  
With thoughts and dreams that every promise share.

How have men carved their beings into stone,  
Etched out their souls in ink upon a board,  
Chiselled and worked long dreams into a bowl,  
And hearts and minds upon an easel thrown!  
All, all are cold beside such warmth, my Lord,  
As fires the living picture of your soul.

## XXIX

How strangely lone unto myself I grow,  
Listening and looking for I know not what;  
Turning my head with terror cold and hot  
At wandering whispers of a music low!  
Familiar pieces of my being flow  
Far, far away, to thymy hill and plot,  
While chained to patience in this close-shut spot  
I sit apart from everything I know.

O Love, I fear the liveness of my limbs  
Leaning to nothing in their solitude.  
Draw up the blinds and let the stars rush in,  
The mournful moon and all the air she swims.  
I would not languish in my mother-mood  
While just without earth makes her old, mad din.

SONNETS OF MOTHERHOOD

XXX

There's Echo with her horn! O, follow swift  
Up hill and valley till we catch her hair;  
And hold her, panting, in the azure air  
Where the loose leaves among the violets drift.  
Onward, from vale to vale, her wild peals lift,  
Mournfully musical. Call out. Hush! There. . . .  
O, follow, follow to her leafy lair  
In the dark shadow of the mountain rift.

Not there. O, call again . . . again . . . again.  
'Tis but our own song singing back to us.  
Dear, when I pass like her who died for Love,  
Glad shall I be if I can sound your strain  
On through the hollows and the mountains thus—  
Echo an echo to the realms above.



SONNETS OF MOTHERHOOD

XXXI

Belovèd, I who shall be mother soon  
Need mothering myself this tired hour,  
As heavily the sweet and precious power  
Weighs on my heart till I am near to swoon.  
Console me, soothe me, Dearest, with the boon  
Of your firm strength, and little comforts shower  
Soft on the drifting doubtings that devour  
Patience and courage when the death-winds croon.

You are your mother, Dear, as I am mine.  
And, as we slumber to our souls' caress,  
Those two who panged for us and weeping smiled,  
Draw near and bind us in a peace divine.  
O mother me; all else is comfortless  
As painted lips above a dying child.

SONNETS OF MOTHERHOOD

XXXII

I must believe in all things, great and small,  
That our sweet child may drink its happy fill  
Of Poesy and Thought through my fine will,  
And grow by light into the Light of all.  
I crowd my mind with every courting call  
Of rose Imagination's airs that spill  
Love and Romance along the coloured hill  
Where Beauty frolics in an elfin shawl.

Now cloaked in dreams of an Arabian night,  
Now fairy-led beneath a bluebell sky,  
Deep in my heart I bear the tidings meet  
Of God's creation to my child's delight.  
All things since Time began are creeds to cry,  
So my child's Godward instinct be complete.

XXXIII

Dearest, how beautiful the people are  
Walking together 'mid the tasks of day,  
Like rainbow banners of immortal clay  
Mingling their fringings in the mist afar.  
From shop, and factory, and running car,  
I watch them streaming their incessant way,  
Eyed like the dawning, by the crescent bay.  
Their march is as the magic of a star.

The blossom knows its beauty, and the fruit  
The rosy splendour of rich rind and stem,  
The bird its wings that soar it into rest,  
And so, the soul its happy human suit.  
O loving life, it sings God's Hope to them  
Till the wise crowd shall melt into His breast.

SONNETS OF MOTHERHOOD

XXXIV

“Holloa! Holloa!” I heard a happy shout  
Of nymph and satyr running in the glade,  
To the soft chuckle of a merry maid,  
Who piped in pleasure for the giddy rout.  
“Join in. Join in,” they echoed in and out.  
“The acorns tumble in the hanging shade,  
And Pan is tickling with a lily blade  
The smooth, black bristle of the dead boar’s snout.”

How did they cheer! How rang upon the turf  
The sharp light music of their flying feet!  
And their horns flashed upon the dancing breeze  
Like a moon-ripple on the leaping surf.  
O happy I, who through my forest, sweet,  
Hear your boy-whoops in games of chase and tease.

SONNETS OF MOTHERHOOD

XXXV

There was a singer once whose soul upsoared  
Through fluted murmurings of lark and flower  
On cloud and wind into impassioned power  
Till he became a trumpet of the Lord.  
You know him, Love, for often on this sward  
You dropped his music like a summer shower  
In lines that linked the hymeneal hour  
To heavenly harmony from chord on chord.

All melodies were his of air and earth,  
Who, Ariel-like, upon the day could stream  
The spirit symphony of land and sea,  
And the mind-music of immortal birth.  
Yet never did his brain triumphant dream  
The song his parents sang unknowingly.

SONNETS OF MOTHERHOOD

XXXVI

I must be patient as my Maker now,  
Who bears the feeble follies of His earth—  
The unbound nickerings of mulish mirth,  
While all His seraphim in anguish bow.  
He alters not His elemental vow  
Of strength and courage and triumphant worth,  
To cry in agony at one small birth,  
Nor shall His daughter who has touched His brow.

Calm as a planet floating over all  
The misty splendour of a yellow morn  
Through cloudy seas of amethyst and blue,  
He suffers silently whate'er befall.  
Clenching His mighty suffering, new-born,  
I, too, shall bear full martyrdom for you.

SONNETS OF MOTHERHOOD

XXXVII

Bend over me. Look long into my eyes  
As once Narcissus in the waters deep,  
Thinking he saw a naiad, half-asleep,  
Smile through her hair upon his swift surprise.  
As he, all day you breathe into my sighs  
"I love you, love you." 'Tis yourself you keep,  
Soul to my soul, and watch the eddies sweep  
The rare reflection that within me lies.

Here's young Narcissus glowing by the lake,  
Leaning him down to catch his happy grace  
In the clear pool. O touch him tenderly,  
Whose deathless mind such lovely thought could make.  
Lean down. Lean down and love your own soft face  
In this child-flower of Immortality.

SONNETS OF MOTHERHOOD

XXXVIII

I mind not, dearest, if Death comes that hour  
When I lie waiting for deliverance,  
Dull, on the borders of a moving trance  
That pales in torture at its own small power.  
Death has no torment for the mother-flower  
Flaunting her beauty to the brown bee's dance;  
And I, Belovèd, by my mind's expanse  
Conquer the pangs that would my faith devour.

Woman's not woman till she mothers man;  
And all your strength about my bones I feel  
With such calm fortitude controlling me,  
Should Death then enter in the Master's plan,  
I'd count me rich to feel my senses reel  
On out of Life to His eternity.



## XXXIX

O Love, I saw a nymph upon a bank  
Piping to Pan a reedy roundelay.  
With dewy mouth, tongue-merrily in play,  
She swooned in rapture of the sound she drank.  
Listening, the god among the grasses shrank,  
Feared at the song yet bending to its sway,  
Till, the mad music echoing away,  
She dropped her pipe and into silence sank.

O, mournfully he kissed her, called her fair,  
And breathed his incense-anguish on her face.  
Her pipe sang clearer on the laughing earth  
With her soul's song that she had carolled there. . . .  
The shepherds came and bore her from the place. . . .  
So would I die to give your song its birth.

SONNETS OF MOTHERHOOD

XL

A miracle of miracles is here.  
Take off your shoes. This place is holy ground.  
No man-child ours like that the shepherd found  
By dreaming Mary when the Star burned clear.  
Our God has given us a woman, dear,  
With satin skin her dimpling shoulders round.  
No pinkest shell with sea-blown bubbles crowned  
Could match the marvel of her tiny ear.

How like to me, and yet 'tis you—all you.  
I dare not touch her. Take your soul, My Own.  
Set in my body with your mind, your sight,  
Your dreams and thoughts with every promise true—  
A queen to sit upon a regal throne  
With a man's soul won out of woman's right.

SONNETS OF MOTHERHOOD

XLI

I think that Heaven is a quiet place,  
Where little feet among the violets flow,  
Light as the laughter of the buds that blow  
Down valleys of the dark in easy pace.  
There Sorrow softens into Love's embrace,  
Folding her closer till their bosoms glow,  
White with the wisdom that the angels know,  
Gathering them both to everlasting grace.

For, Love, last night within this pulsing room  
When travail-terrors through the silence poured,  
I seemed to stumble on the Death-pangs seven  
Touching the borders of the sobbing tomb,  
When sudden, smiling in a wise reward,  
This child released me to the calm of Heaven.

SONNETS OF MOTHERHOOD

XLII

O rosy Soul, housed in such excellence  
Of silken skin and dimples crinkling mirth,  
Why have you hastened to this old, green earth  
To wreck your beauty in a strained suspense?  
The skylark in his song outcarols sense,  
Warbling the promise of another birth.  
Do you too breathe a wider fairer worth  
In the fresh frolics of your innocence?

O Flesh, you are no channel for mere food,  
No tomb of animals, nor Death's cold sea.  
Red home of Life, wherein the spirit small  
Still cries for a diviner cloak and hood.  
O singing bird from the deep soul of me,  
You are God's answer to the human call.

## XLIII

We look at her in wonder, O my soul,  
Asking by eye to eye, "Whence came she here?"  
Touching the tiny finger-tips in fear  
As if we fancied Death yet held control.  
You said: "Perchance these little, white feet stole  
Down streets of Memphis, still this many a year;  
Through Greece and Rome with what a pang and tear  
They may have bled to reach our hearts' safe goal."

I said, "She may have run through every land,  
O'er dancing strips of valley rare and green  
Weary with woe and heavy with old pain,  
Or walked dim cloisters with a holy band;  
But she has come from out my frame serene,  
And is but you and me made young again."

SONNETS OF MOTHERHOOD

XLIV

I mused once how there was nor Time nor Place  
Since I could span them both with merry ease,  
By thought and dream and moving memories  
That bridged the awful distances of Space.  
But, since a maiden full of laughing grace  
Came from this body, I have crossed strange seas,  
Met Time with all his chiming melodies  
And passed each passage of the mortal race.

Now do I mark how once long, long ago,  
The Maker took a seed of singing light  
And gave it to the simple planter Man,  
In the true Woman of his heart to sow.  
He reaped the harvest from her being white  
Of Love's eternity through Life's short span.

SONNETS OF MOTHERHOOD

XLV

Dearest, your mother feels (though dead) this birth—  
Laughs at the fire within your shining eyes—  
Your eyes, yet mine, wherein such glory lies  
Never before beheld upon the earth.  
She scents the fragrance of the lily-mirth  
Lilting this body that I drew all-wise  
Out of your own, so hers, and with low sighs,  
Mellowed in mine to what a wondrous worth.

Kiss me. Kiss her. The miracle is wrought—  
The simple beauty out of simple love—  
Mother and father, child and God—all One—  
Eternal trinity for ever sought.  
O, blessèd from her quiet place above,  
Your mother kisses us—a life's work done.

## COLUMBINE

I SAT alone in my musty room  
In the still, dark night with my shattered dreams,  
When I heard a voice in the trembling gloom  
Through the airy drift that the midnight streams:  
“Let me in, let me in to the light again  
From the wind and wail of the beating rain!”

I opened the door and I looked outside  
With the sob of years in my broken heart.  
“Oh, my Columbine, is it you,” I cried,  
“Coming back to the world with your love and art;  
When your stage is dark and the curtain down,  
And the white moths thick in your crumpled gown?”

She raised her pinched little painted face  
With a grave, slow smile, and her soft mouth said:  
“Let me dance one step in this warm, small place,  
For my heart grew sick with the weary dead  
When I heard you call; and I took my cue  
From the sad, sad thoughts that were blinding you.”

I drew her into the candle glow,  
With her tinselled frock and her worn, silk shoes.  
And I said: “Be quick, for the light is low  
And there’s barely a tip of the time to lose.  
I will tap my soul for the old, old tune  
That your Harlequin loved by the mad, white moon.”



## COLUMBINE

She stood tiptoe on the shadowy floor.

With a pirouette and a smile she turned;  
But in faint fell down at the open door

As the light and herself in smoke out-burned.  
And I wept alone in the night-tide black  
With the thoughts and dreams that had brought her back.

Alas! alas for an old romance;

For the heart of Youth and a love long dead;  
For the dancing feet and the eyes' down-glance

Of a Columbine in her spangles red!  
For an old romance is a new regret  
When a maiden's heart cannot quite forget.

## HEART'S DESIRE

WHEN my true love walks with me  
Through the fields of Fantasy,  
All in rosy scented fire  
Dance the elves of Heart's Desire;  
And the fairy moon and white  
Drops the laughter of Delight  
While the leaves and branches sing  
In my sweet Imagining;  
And the wee folk two and two  
Kiss me with their kirtles blue.

O, I lilt with them along  
To the measure of their song,  
And I sip the curds and wine  
That they serve beneath the vine,  
With a moonbeam dipped in dew  
And the star-spice running through;  
Till a spell begins to spin  
All the charms of Elfland in,  
When my true love walks with me  
Through the fields of Fantasy.

## AUSTRALIA IN ENGLAND

HE called. . . . The quiet nurse stole to his side,  
Seeing how with his hands he strove to hide  
Dull tears, that from his mother's breast had sprung  
And stayed in his because he was so young.  
He spoke. "How long must I breathe England's air  
When the home-hills are calling me out there?"  
She leaned to him the pity of her soul,  
For the Death-drums beat out a muffled toll.  
April was laughing in the English lanes,  
Daintily scornful of his soldier-pains.  
April was whistling of a lover-band;  
But his closed eyes were in another land. . . .  
O, the lark, soaring up the English sky,  
Had sung him home to meet the curlew's cry. . . .  
He smiled. . . . The little nurse bent over him—  
Blue eyes unmisted with a memory dim—  
And, moving gently from the dead apart,  
She heard his green hills singing in her heart.

## WISHES

WERE all the stars but mine to spend,  
I'd take a purse of air,  
And travel to the rainbow's end  
To buy the wonders there.

And still with half my wealth unspent  
I'd barter light for gems—  
The fortunes of the Gypsy's tent  
And fairy diadems.

For all the pearls of all the sea  
I'd pay the highest price;  
I'd buy old spice of memory,  
And wines of Paradise.

Then under rosy arches tall  
I'd homeward drive my cart;  
And take the loaded treasures all  
To bank them in your heart.

## WOMAN

I AM the luring Vivien  
With eyes too bright for mortal men,  
With lithe, long fingers full of fire  
And lips alight with love's desire.

*O man of mine, come down, come down,  
Across the bush and bracken brown!  
I am the luring Vivien  
Who kisses sages young agen.*

I carol Lurlei's siren song  
O'er magic waters, deep and long—  
Wide depths of green enchanted seas  
And luscious caves of coral ease.

*O man of mine, row out, row out  
Where creek and river wind about!  
I carol Lurlei's siren song  
Of love that drowns in rapture strong.*

I hold the cup that Circe held  
When man to brutish beast she spelled.  
The wine is red. The wine is sweet  
With passion's scent and joy complete.

WOMAN

*O man of mine, come drink, come drink  
The spell is bubbling to the brink!  
I hold the cup that Circe held  
With charms as soft as fears dispelled.*

I am a luring singing witch,  
With spells and potions white and rich.  
I gather them at early morn  
Before the first black lamb is born.

*O man of mine, be true, be true;  
Such sorcery was made by you!  
I learned it when I was a child,  
But had forgot it till you smiled.*

## GIPSY-JOY

LIGHTS are flashing through the woodland trees.  
    Spangles glance  
    To a brown foot's dance.  
Zithers breaking on the lilting breeze  
Banish sorrow with their melodies.

Who'll come roving to a Romany rhyme,  
    Hand in hand  
    With a gipsy band,  
Clicking fingers to the chestnuts' chime,  
Finding Fortune in the front of Time?

Trinkets tinkle to a restless tune.  
    Pile the load  
    For the open road!  
Careless kettles 'neath a vagrant moon  
Sing of horses to be jogging soon.

Who'll leave fetters for the wild, free air,  
    Strolling far  
    By a vagabond star?  
Outlaw Laughter is the only care  
Gipsies carry with the gold they share.

Join in, traveller, with the jingling dance.  
    Fairy Fate  
    Is a merry mate.  
Luck is lurking in the cards' romance.  
Come and shuffle them and take your chance.

## FAIRY RIDE

**I**N the merry, merry morning I rode down  
On a little white mare to True-Love town.  
    Oh, her bells rang high  
    And she seemed to fly  
As we raced through the glens and the hollows brown.

With a tirra lirra la by Childhood Bay  
To a carnival call she pranced in play,  
    Till the rein I drew  
    At a tower I knew,  
Where I called to my love, "Come away, away."

Oh, I hallooed "A-hoy, I've come for you!  
Will you ride to my home of billows blue?"  
    But he cried, "Alack,  
    You must gallop back,  
For I've battles to wage, and my tasks to do."

"I've a ripple-lapping cave of pearl," I said,  
"And a myriad harps their airs will wed  
    To delight your ears  
    For a thousand years,  
If you'll sleep on the weeds of my fairy bed."

With a tirra lirra la he flew to me,  
And he rode in my heart to Youth's far sea,  
    Where a-hoy, a-hoy,  
    Like a girl and boy  
We dwell with our dreams and our fancies free.



## THE MAGIC FIDDLER

OH, where are you leading me, fiddler of mine,  
With the tink and the clink of your little gold strings?  
My heart is adream on a bubble of wine,  
And the lip of my cup has been kissed by a king's.

My senses are singing a fairyland song  
To your music of mirth, and I cannot keep still.  
Oh, my feet beat a dance as you lead me along  
With your, "Follow me, follow me over the hill."

What light on the water! What joy in the air!  
The stars are all nodding and keeping in time;  
And slim little evening with one shoulder bare  
Is running with bracelets and anklets achime.

How glad are the glow-worms that light the green wood!  
And see what a feast at the tree's mossy root!  
White nuts and brown spices and cinnamon good  
And blossom-bells brimming with pink pixie fruit!

On, on! I will follow you over the way  
By red rosy walls and the old rustic mill;  
For my heart knows all tunes that your fiddle can play,  
As it knows all the laughter that twilight can spill.

I cannot come back, for those little tunes press  
As close as the grass and the star-song above—  
Oh, it all comes of wearing a fairy-green dress  
And drinking sweet wine from a white cup of Love!

## THE LAND OF HEART'S DESIRE

YEATS lying by my Bible yesternight,  
A wild, strange wind came blowing through the room,  
Mingling the leaves into a line of light,  
Like a long angel-bloom.

My ears were closed unto the sounds of earth;  
My eyes saw not its colours of content;  
For flowing slowly as a stream of mirth  
Soft voices rose and blent.

And, lightly laughing, neath an olive tree  
The Faery Child danced dreamily along.  
Her slender feet among the leaves, white, free,  
Made a sweet, holy song.

Angels and seraphim with joy drew nigh,  
Laving their pinions in the light she shed;  
And God Himself breathed laughter through the sigh  
Of the wise, wandering dead.

So much of beauty and of milk-white peace,  
Young song and dance and happy rest, ran there,  
I felt the sorrow of my wrinkles crease  
To a smile fine as air.

THE LAND OF HEART'S DESIRE

And, all my senses being shut and still,  
I knew I leaned above the blessed place  
Where He Who wrought me dreamed away His will  
Before He made the race.

(Yeats lying open by the holy Book)  
A shadowy seraph through the silence trod,  
And hung a thorn twig on the shepherd's crook  
To light the word of God.

## SLEEP

**H**USHED is the heart of night. All things are still,  
As down the creeping softness Silence shakes  
Her noiseless censer at her drowsy will,  
And not one murmur makes.

The pictures dream upon the soft, grey walls,  
Muffled in muted sound that from the chords  
Of slumbering harps and cymbals lulling falls  
Along their painted swords.

Odours of easeful Eastern mysteries  
Coil from the somnolent silk coverlet,  
Whose woven widths of flowers and brodered trees  
Fade, now the moon has set.

All things are fast asleep. Slow Darkness lies  
Upon the lids of Night inaudibly;  
And God is dreaming of His Paradise  
At rest in you and me.

## CHILD-SONG

**O** LITTLE gold moon in your happy cloud-ship,  
Sail swift through the waves of your quiet blue sea,  
And, as the white sails to the high billows dip,  
Spill over my daddy a message for me.

For you will bend down to him soon in the West,  
And wait where he kneels, and the wild bullets fly;  
You'll touch the kind knees where he rocked me to rest,  
And see the brave light in the blue of his eye.

So tell him the corn's nearly ripe, and the hay  
Is piled up in stacks by the old wooden wall.  
There's plenty of grass for the chestnut and bay,  
And sunbeams are running with joy over all.

And take a wee kiss. Hush! there's no one can hear!  
Now catch it, and fold it up tight in your curl;  
And, when he is dreaming of mother, swing near  
And drop it with love from his own little girl.

## SPIRITS OF THE STREET

WAITING for Love upon a wintry day  
Within the noisy street,  
I watched the strange crowd go its unknown way  
On ever-restless feet.

Sometimes a face looked swiftly into mine  
With half-familiar eyes.  
Sometimes from out the never-ending line  
One smiled in pleased surprise.

I knew not whence they came nor whither bound,  
Grief-bowed and young with mirth,  
Save that their bodies made a singing sound  
Not wholly of the earth.

And, looking out upon the trembling band  
Of laughter, pain and bliss,  
I marked how spirits of another land  
Mingled and mixed with this.

Love came and spoke my name in accents sweet.  
I turned all eagerly.  
We smiled; and joined the shadows of the street—  
Ghosts of eternity.

## AN EARLY MOON

COME up from the valleys of Sorrow, dear love,  
To the heights of the hyacinth hills.  
There's a little pale moon in the meadows above,  
And it's joy that the fairy thing spills.

O, why should she trip through the daytime like this  
On her pearly white feet and fine;  
But to give me the scent of your very first kiss  
And to match it and mate it with mine?

O love, make a ring of the grass where we lie.  
Kiss it wisely and pledge yourself true.  
And to-night when she dances all golden on high  
I shall give my girl-sweetness to you.

## TINKER TIME

**T**INKER Time is a merry old man,  
Winding by with his creaky van,  
Shouting, "Ho,"  
As the people go,  
"Rich man, poor man, beggarman, thief,  
Bring out your burdens and your world-old Grief.  
Work is long, and my hours are brief."

Out they run with their plagues unpacked,  
Hope ahead with her kettle cracked.  
Folly last  
With his bells held fast,  
Tuneless twanging by his tattered cap.  
Young folk, old folk, hear the hammers tap!  
Heap your troubles in the Tinker's lap.

Who's this running with a broken pot?  
Fortune beggared of her last, lean jot,  
Jogging by  
To a pauper's sigh;  
Luck beside her with a cup to mend.  
Come, all my hearties, with a dream to spend!  
Cares aboard for the rainbow's end!



TINKER TIME

Here is Love with a heart in twain,  
Youth repairing it with tears in vain.  
    Fiddling Song  
    In the jostling throng  
Waves the ribbon of a broken bow.  
Tailor, sailor passing to and fro,  
Time is swift, bring your wares of Woe!

Down the road there's a rollicking cry.  
Off he goes with a winking eye,  
    Singing, "Ho,"  
    As the seasons go,  
"Soldier, sailor, beggarman, thief,  
I've got a solder for your care and grief.  
Joy wears long, and your tears are brief."

## LITTLE BO-PEEP

O TELL me," she said, "of that Little Bo-Peep  
Who went to the meadows and lost her sheep;  
And left all their dear little woolly tails there  
Alone in the night on that moonshiny air.

"Was she tiny like me, with a mother like you  
Who rocked her and hushed her to sleep as you do?  
Did she have a big Daddy who tucked her to bed  
And counted the curls on her little brown head?

"She had a wee crook. O, I know about that.  
But did she wear ribbons and socks and a hat?  
And could she pick Peter Pan pansies like me?  
I wish you would tell me." She cuddled my knee.

"O, I'm going out when I grow a big girl  
And pin up my hair with a comb and a pearl.  
I'll find all the tails of those woolly white sheep  
And tie them up fast." Then she tumbled to sleep.

My Little Bo-Peep, when she watches her sheep  
In the meadows of Motherhood, scented and deep,  
How I hope if the darling things ever should err,  
They'll bring all their little white tales home to her.

## LOVE'S EVOLUTION

**I**N you, as in a crystal clear  
That shows revolving time and space,  
I see each age of man appear  
At once before my face.

I hurt you with a little word;  
Red flames your cheek, your dear eyes blaze—  
The savage from his stone-age stirred  
At tiger-madness plays.

But quick to sweet remorse you spring,  
Your warm, brown hands encompass me;  
And to your iron strength I cling—  
Courageous, firm and free.

Hope wakens at your earnest hold,  
Rearing her citadel of brass,  
Where gleaming banners beat and fold  
Across a sea of glass.

And then you kiss me, and your love  
Sings of the golden age of song,  
Of stars and those large realms above  
To which we move along.

## FRAGMENT

**I**F I could scatter myself like notes of birds—  
My body, my blood, like flocks of affectionate words;  
If I could send each cell like a wild song singing,  
Each drop of laughing blood as a verse-bell ringing,  
Not then would it pay the great thanksgiving price  
In the utmost incense and joy of sacrifice,  
For the thing that was wrought by the wind and the sea and  
the earth  
When they compassed the infinite wonder of life and birth,  
That my soul such a love of loves may bring to you  
When we kiss like clashing stars in the front of the dew.

## NUMERALS

**M**Y mind is full of a hundred things,  
That crowded morn with her movement brings,  
Flooding my heart with a thousand fears  
Of slipping joys and impending tears.

But hey! Chuckle hey for the work-clogged day!  
Who cares a jot for her taxes grey?  
When night unloosens her window-bars,  
My eyes are filled with a million stars.

## HAPPY SONG

I AM too much alive to sing.  
I want to shout and leap and fling  
My laughing arms into the air  
And dance on tip-toe everywhere.  
With not a thought and not a dream  
I want to skip beside a stream  
In Arcady, in Arcady,  
And woo the wood-gods all to me.

I want to feel them chase me down  
Among the grasses green and brown,  
With many a mad and merry cry  
Of Youth and Gladness ringing high,  
Till reeling frolic, drunk with mirth,  
Sink to exhaustion on the earth,  
In Arcady, in Arcady!  
Tra-la-la-la, who catches me?

## HELEN IN HYDE PARK

WALKING together in the quiet joy  
After the sunset glow,  
My love and I talked gravely of old Troy  
Three thousand years ago.

And down the ramparts of our memories then  
We saw great Helen pass,  
Hiding her eyes where forms of fallen men  
Showed darkly in the grass.

I, being woman and in love, sighed low  
For the cold dead and white;  
But my wise love saw the long afterglow  
Of Beauty and Delight.

Loitering among the leaves, a silence grew  
Between us wisdom-deep.  
We thought of snowy ridges and the blue  
Ægean where men sleep;

Of little graves beside a sobbing sea  
Near Troja's wind-swept plain,  
Where, guarded by white walls of Memory,  
Rest our immortal slain.

HELEN IN HYDE PARK

Then down between the trees to us there came  
Our Helen in distress—  
A girl who read with heart and face aflame  
Of War's dark piteousness.

She wept upon a name with sudden tears  
And hid her blinded eyes,  
Seeking a shelter lest our listening ears  
Should hear her smothered cries.

Her hero in the clash of steel on steel,  
Fighting for her afar,  
Had perished that the world might know and feel  
How near the ages are.

Helen of Homer, Helen of the park!  
And still the cycles roll  
Out of the light and onward to the dark  
To prove a woman's soul.

Beauty is Truth. My love and I passed on  
With sighing of regret.  
Let the steel clash! The faith of men were gone  
If Helen could forget.

## A WEDDING SONG

### *The Bride*

Listen, O listen, sweet maidens of mine,  
Rosemary, Alice and meek Coraline,  
Hymen is blowing his bugle of fire  
Summoning Love to the door of Desire.

Hasten, O hasten;

His harmonies chasten

All that is wild in the wine of delight.  
Hasten and dress me in delicate white,  
Soft as the stars in the front of the night.

Maidens, my virginal veiling unfold,  
Bring in the gown with the broider of gold.  
Girdles of gladnesses swing to the knee,  
Jewelled with pearls from the outermost sea.

Laces wrought slenderly,

Loop them up tenderly,

Rosemary, Alice, and meek Coraline;  
Love is the lyric of laughter and wine,  
Soon will his melody mingle in mine.

### *The Village Girls*

Lovely with Life is she and fair,  
A blossom rare with fragrancly.  
O, braid her soft and golden hair,  
Her sweets set free.



A WEDDING SONG

Light up, light up the smiling eyes  
Beneath the lashes cool as night,  
Love-torches into Paradise  
    And long delight.

Her mouth is sweet and very small  
Where kisses sing themselves to sleep.  
O Hymen, Hymen, softer call  
    Your music deep.  
O, let it flutter gently by  
With youngest ecstasies that lure  
The easy echo of a sigh  
    To bliss demure.

We are too young to marry yet.  
We have no breasts where Love may rest.  
O, lose no longings in regret,  
    Sweet Youth is best.  
Lead out the little, laughing bride,  
With pearl, and flower, and silver lace.  
O, lead her to her bridegroom's side  
    And Love's embrace.

*The Bridegroom*

My Love's a young love, coming all in white—  
    Coming up the green way  
    Where the grasses play.

A WEDDING SONG

My Love's a fair love, trippingly and light  
Bringing all the boy-dreams dancing to my sight.

Hush, heart, your glad song. Sing it to her ear,  
Sing it to her soft breast  
When you taste its rest.

Hush, heart, your mad song. She is coming near,  
Coming with a red kiss, smiling through a tear.

*The Mother*

This is my daughter, my dove undefiled,  
Clear as the sun at the noon;  
Choice as the apples she pulled when a child  
Under the arch of the moon.

Down in the vineyard of Beauty she grew  
Pure as her morning-white smock;  
Cooling her feet in the innocent dew,  
Tracing the steps of the flock.

Take her, O Chosen One. Soft through the night  
Walk in the garden with her.  
Bathe with your soul in her lily delight—  
Rapture of honey and myrrh.

A WEDDING SONG

*The Village Girls*

How far have the feet of Girlhood fled  
From all that they loved last eve,  
Away from the woods that they used to tread  
And the meadows of Make-Believe!

O, whither so fast, our fairest one?  
What pleasures can beckon you?  
The blossoms blow mirth as we leap and run  
To the rainbow caught in the dew.

O, laggard our dreams in Dimple Dell  
And paths where the sun-maids play.  
What joy was awake in your wedding bell  
In the lilt of its brazen sway?

We never shall know till golden years  
Run red at the feet of Time;  
And we hurry after with tingling ears,  
To the tune of the wedding chime.

*The Bride*

Wake, O wake, my laughing soul,  
Let your madding music roll  
Clear and high to heaven's gate  
Where the loves of Eden wait.

A WEDDING SONG

Loosen locks  
When he knocks,  
And his footsteps make a song  
All the happy house along  
With a measure sweet and strong.

Hungry for his love am I.  
'Mid the Life-corn shall I lie.  
O, the ecstasy of rest—  
Poppies on a wheaten breast  
    Bending low  
    To the glow  
Of his kisses fine and red,  
Ravishing his soul for bread  
Of the fragrant nuptial bed.

He is comely as the king  
Of the green, enchanted spring.  
Wake, O wake, my soul to light  
All Youth's blisses in his sight.

    Hush, a sigh  
    Coming nigh—  
Now your sweetest strain begin.  
All delight is here to win.  
Call him in. O, call him in.

## A WEDDING SONG

### *The Mother*

House of my heart, very empty you are—  
Quiet your happy, red bell,  
Ringing in rest to the throb of a star  
Swift where the long wishes swell.

Here did she frolic from fancy to truth—  
Here danced her rosy-white feet,  
Down by the yellowy valleys of Youth  
Blossoming Love to their beat.

Shut is the meek little lattice of dreams,  
Hiding the hoods of her play.  
Now, to the bend of the singing moonbeams,  
Love lifts the lilt of his lay.

### *The Village Girls*

Return to the vales where the little lambs play,  
O daughter, dear daughter of light.  
The circle is broken, the children away,  
And stilled is their shout of delight.

Come down to the pool where the rushes are green,  
And lead us with laughter once more.  
The dancers are idle, the ball never seen  
High-flung on the blossomy shore.

## A WEDDING SONG

Now heaped in neglect are the garlands of flowers;  
O daughter, dear daughter of song,  
Come down to the turn of the young, happy hours  
And waken the joy of the throng.

Sweet, here by the walls of your garden we wait,  
Low-calling you out to our play.  
Return, O return ere the hour be too late  
And dance to the dip of the day.

She speaks not. She rests in the peace of her shrine.  
Away, for the calling is vain.  
She never will skip at the bend of the vine,  
Or chase us to Folly again.

### *The Bridegroom*

Pleasant are the ripe fruits growing by the wall,  
Slender the palm-tree  
Bending to the sea.  
Lovely is the red rose ere the petals fall,  
But my Love's beauty overpasses all.

Give me, Dear, your white breast where my kiss may  
cling—  
Give me your soft eyes  
Lidded o'er with sighs.

A WEDDING SONG

Listen, my Belovèd, how the young girls sing  
And call you thither to their song's low swing.

*The Bride*

Rosemary, Alice and meek Coraline,  
Mirth of the morning is married to mine.  
Never again can I come to your call,  
Never dance after the ball.

    Soften your sighing.

    In dreams interlying

Love is asleep in the chamber of rest.  
Waken him not. By the heart in my breast  
He is my Life-giving guest.

Go from my garden away to your play.  
Go to the throng by the Buttercup Way.  
Here have I yielded my Girlhood's desire,  
Clear as a fountain of fire.

    I am my lover's,

    Whose fancy discovers

All that is sweet on the tongue of Love's bell,  
Melodies loosed in its lift and its swell.

Go, and for ever, farewell.

A WEDDING SONG

*The Bridegroom*

Belovèd, Belovèd, O, weep on my heart,  
Let the rivers of Memory start.  
The garlands of Childhood you gathered for me  
Shall blossom again at your knee.

A fountain of flowers shall flow at my call  
When the birthday bells ring over all,  
And bring you again at the touch of a kiss  
The playtime delights that you miss.

*The Village Girls*

No longer wait. Let us away  
And join again the dance of day.  
She will not hear us though we cry  
    A long Good-bye.  
She will not come to meet us now  
Where all the dew-sad blossoms bow.  
She will not leave her love again,  
    Our song is vain.

Let us away. The wood-doves call.  
The ripe wild fruit begins to fall.  
And by the willows bent in sleep  
    The young lambs leap.



A WEDDING SONG

Kiss hands to her. O, wave and go.  
The bluebells 'neath the morning blow;  
And toll a maiden's wedding knell:  
"Farewell, Farewell!"

Her thoughts and dreams no more are ours.  
Young Hymen honies all her hours.  
O aching hearts that beat to sigh,  
Go by. Go by.  
She knows a sweeter life than we,  
Deep-hidden in Love's ecstasy.  
Come! She will step our playtime shore  
No more, no more.

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